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**Progression of African-Caribbean students in further
education: Positive approaches for academic success**

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This thesis is submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Education (EdD)

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies

CREET (Education)

The Open University

October 2019

Abstract

This study explored the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students aged 16-18, including the factors that may influence their achievement, and considered how further education policy and practice may support their academic progression. Department for Education data showed significant and persistent underachievement of these students which could not be accounted for by their socio-economic status, or their attitude towards education.

Elements of critical race theory provided the theoretical framework for this thesis, specifically, race as a social construct, that racism is ingrained into everyday interactions, and the intersectionality of race, gender and class.

This research employed a case study research style and innovatively combined student responses to form a "collective voice." Data was gathered using Metaplan, a focus group technique new to research in further education, and a semi-structured questionnaire. 23 students and six teachers participated in the study. The data gathered was coded and common themes identified. These were then analysed in relation to current literature and the research questions.

The study found that factors intrinsic to the students, such as aspirations for the future, support received from families and experiences of academic success had a positive influence on their academic achievement. Conversely, structural factors in educational policy and practice were seen to have a negative influence, such as the legacy of colonialism and slavery; low teachers' expectations; a Eurocentric curriculum as a source of micro-invalidations; and racial stereotypes.

Policy and practice recommendations include raising teachers' awareness of stereotyping; teacher education that develops teachers' understanding and appreciation of students' cultures; developing an inclusive curriculum that is empowering for all students; providing improved study skills training, providing targeted guidance and information to access Higher Education; and publication of improved ethnicity data relating to achievement. Methodology recommendations include consideration of critical race theory and the use of Metaplan techniques in educational research.

Acknowledgement

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my supervisors, Dr Angela Srivastava and Dr Diana Harris. Dr Angela Srivastava, my main supervisor, for her ability to challenge my thinking whilst allowing me to grow as a researcher, for her advice, comments, counsel and understanding, and for her constant support throughout my Doctorate study especially through difficult times. Furthermore, I would like to thank June Ayres, EdD Programme Administrator, for her invaluable support.

My thanks go out to the further education organisations that kindly took part in the research, the students who gave freely of their time to share their views with me, and the teachers and managers who made it possible.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support and encouragement of my family, my partner Anthony for the many hours of discussion and proofreading, my daughter Helena, my son Laurence, and my mother Ruby, who encouraged me by always having time to listen, and supported me through their thoughtful comments, patience and good humour.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter the context and rationale for studying the progression of African-Caribbean students are presented, as the achievement of these students in further education appears to be an under-researched area. The impact of race, as well as gender and socio-economic status are considered. Key terms used in the study relating to ethnicity, education and social class are discussed.

Data from the Department for Education (DfE) is presented showing the impact of race, gender and socio-economic status on level 2 academic achievement at age 16 and the impact of race, gender and socio-economic status on level 3 achievement at age 18-19. This gives an indication of what students may have gained from their further education experience. The success of students in gaining university places is an important measure of students' achievement on the completion of further education. Therefore, a brief analysis of the impact of race and gender on university destinations using data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency is also presented.

Following this, my ontological perspective is outlined, including my own experience of the English education system, and my motivations for researching this thesis topic. Finally, the content of the thesis is outlined.

Context

In 2016 the then Prime Minister David Cameron wrote that there were obstacles for Black young people in gaining entrance to top universities, citing poor schooling as one of the reasons (Cameron, 2016). He went on to acknowledge that Britain remains racist and that Black young people continue to experience

subtle discrimination. This concurs with my own experience of Britain and its education system as an African-Caribbean female. Further, I had noticed a gap in the literature relating to the achievement of African-Caribbean students in further education (ages 16-18). Data from the English Department for Education (DfE) clearly shows the underachievement of many of these students (Appendix A, p. 260) and university admissions data shows that many are less successful in gaining entry to the universities with higher entrance requirements when compared to students of other ethnicities (Appendix B, p. 272).

The English National Curriculum is organised into five key stages (KS1-5). Key stage 4 identifies students aged 14 to 16 years of age in school years 10 and 11. At the end of these two years of study, students undertake GCSE examinations, or their equivalent to gain level 2 qualifications. Key stage 5 students are typically 16 to 19 years of age and attend a school sixth form or a further education establishment such as a sixth form college or Further Education College. During this time students may study for level 3 qualifications such as A-levels, national vocational qualifications (NVQs) or National Diplomas. The table below presents a brief overview of the key stages of the English education system at ages 3-18.

Key stage	Age	Year groups	Assessments and examinations
Key stage 0 Nursery, Infant Reception	3-5	0-1	Early years foundation stage profile
Key stage 1 Primary education	5-7	1-2	SATS, test (End of Key Stage Tests and Assessments) Teacher assessment
Key stage 2 Primary education	7-11	3-6	SATS, test (End of Key Stage Tests and Assessments)
Key stage 3 Secondary education	11-14	7-9	
Key stage 4 Secondary education	14-16	10-11	GCSEs
Key stage 5 Sixth form, Further education college	16-18	12-13	A-levels, AS-Levels, NVQs, National Diplomas

Table 1: The key stages of the English education system

For further clarification of terms used within this study, the term Black can have several meanings. The English Department for Education (DfE) data sets use Black to encompass students of African ethnic origin, including those of African-Caribbean origin. Students who took part in this study self-identified themselves in

a political manner as Black, some being Arabic or Asian. The term students/people of colour is used within this study to refer to African-Caribbean students and those who define themselves as Black. DfE data breaks down its figures by pupil characteristics, one of which is ethnicity. The term ethnicity when used to define different groups of students appears contentious as it denotes white as an ethnicity as a group which includes white British, Irish, travellers of Irish heritage, Gypsy / Roma and any other white. The possible danger of using ethnicity and not race was highlighted by Bilge (2013) and Petzen (2012) who suggested that by declaring race as an irrelevant category for Europe, and instead framing issues through characteristics such as ethnicity and religion there is a danger that the concept of race is seen as insignificant, possibly concealing the practice of racism.

Within this study White British refers to the students of this ethnicity who attend schools in England. The term mixed-race African-Caribbean is used to designate dual heritage people of African-Caribbean and White British origin. In the Department for Education (DfE) data charted and discussed in this thesis, the term White and Black Caribbean is used to denote dual heritage people of African-Caribbean and White British origin. In the HEIDI higher education participation data provided by HESA that is charted and discussed in this thesis, ethnicity was organised into twelve categories. These categories included Black or Black British-Caribbean and other (including mixed). Hence in the analysis it was not possible to separate out the higher education participation of mixed heritage students of African-Caribbean and students of other mixed heritages.

Recent Department for Education GCSE achievement data (DfE, 2015b) indicated that African-Caribbean males and males of mixed White and African-Caribbean ethnicity formed two of the lowest-achieving groups in the English education

system. Students of mixed White and African-Caribbean ethnicity form one of the fastest growing minority groups within the education system (Haynes et al. 2006; Bhattacharyya et al. 2003). The post-16 further education and skills sector includes all government funded education excluding higher (degree-level) education. Students' participation rates are high in further education: for example, in 2013 over 90 per cent of White British, 'White and Black Caribbean' and 'Black Caribbean' students in this age group started further education courses (DfE, 2016; Figure 26, Appendix A, p. 269). Students can undertake both academic programmes of study such as A-levels and vocational programmes such as apprenticeships and BTEC national diplomas. In addition, students can re-take Level 2 qualifications in subjects such as mathematics and English language; in fact, this is now mandatory for students who fail to achieve GCSE mathematics and English language at grade C (or equivalent) at age 16 (Education Funding Agency, 2016).

Student Achievement

For this study achievement is defined in terms of academic attainment, essentially by gaining sufficient qualifications to qualify for entrance to university. The reason for focusing on this form of achievement is its long-term impact on the life chances of the individual, as poor education performance appears to be one of the main barriers which prevent people moving out of poverty (ESRC, 2012).

The continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students within the English education system gives rise for concern (Gillborn, 2008). This research focuses on the achievement of African-Caribbean students at the ages of 16 to 18 in post-16 education. The purpose of the research is to look for insights into the underlying

causes of the underachievement of these students, including any structural and hidden influences that impact on the achievement of African-Caribbean students. Possible benefits of the research findings include influencing education policy and practice to improve the education achievement of these groups, enabling them to progress and make a fuller contribution to their immediate and wider communities.

There is a need to explore and understand the impact of academic achievement at 16 and its possible influence on future academic achievement. For example, the Department for Education (DfE) GCSE achievement data, (5 A*-C grades including mathematics and English) for African-Caribbean students shows improvement over the six years from 2008-2013, with a significant dip in outcomes for all student groups in 2014. However, in 2014, there was still an 11-percentage point gap between White British males and Black Caribbean males. The data also shows an 8-percentage point gap between White males and males of mixed White and Black Caribbean ethnicity in 2014 (Figure 1, p. 20). There has been some improvement in GCSE achievement for many ethnic groups at age 16, but the trend did not continue into 2014, which observed a significant dip across all groups. However, this dip was more pronounced for Black Caribbean males and mixed White and Black Caribbean males. It has been well researched and acknowledged that African-Caribbean males do less well than many other groups of students at age 16, following 11 years of schooling (Rampton, 1981; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Gillborn et al., 2012; Bhattacharyya et al., 2003).

The DfE data provides student achievement data grouped by various combinations of student characteristics, including eligibility for free school meals. This characteristic (denoted eFSM) may be used as a crude proxy for students from

socio-economically deprived households. However, this measure includes only a proportion of such disadvantaged students (Taylor, 2017). Additionally, non-eligibility for free school meals does not equate to students living in middle class households (Gillborn and Rollock, 2010). This is further discussed in Intersectionality and anti-essentialism (p. 47).

As a result of the literature review and reflection on the quantitative data it was decided not to research specifically into the impact of gender since although significant, gives only a partial insight into the continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students when compared to other groups of students, as discussed under Intersectionality and anti-essentialism (p. 47). Gender similarities or differences were not considered specifically, but rather the experiences of the group as a whole, although at times there may be a focus on one gender to illustrate a point.

Level 2 attainment and destination data

Students' options for key stage 5 (age 16-19) are likely to be determined by their performance in the level 2 examinations such as GCSEs that they take at the end of key stage 4 at age 16. The DfE gathers data and publishes statistics on level 2 exam achievement and student destinations. Key measures from this data were extracted and analysed below and in greater detail in Appendix A (p. 260), and form part of the rationale for the thesis.

To measure level 2 academic achievement, data provided by the DfE was obtained relating to students' level 2 attainment and students' destinations after taking these examinations. The DfE level 2 attainment measure used in the analysis presented in this section was the percentage of students gaining five GCSE at

grades A* to C or equivalent, including the subjects of English and Mathematics, by the end of key stage 4. These level 2 figures were broken down by year and by various student characteristics such as gender, socio-economic status and ethnic group.

To compare the level 2 achievement of Black Caribbean and mixed White and Black Caribbean students against other ethnic groups, the DfE level 2 attainment data (2015b) for 2014 was broken down by ethnicity and gender (Figure 21, Appendix A, p. 264). This figure shows that some ethnicities were achieving well and, in some cases, very well at GCSE level in 2014, however, this could not be said for Black Caribbean students or mixed White and Black Caribbean students. The data showed a marked gender difference in level 2 achievements between Black Caribbean female and Black Caribbean male students of 15 percentage points. However, Black Caribbean females were shown to have achieved less well academically than their White counterparts by eight percentage points. It also highlighted that African-Caribbean male students were the lowest achievers in 2014 at level 2.

To compare the level 2 achievement trends of White British students with Black and White and Black Caribbean students, the DfE level 2 attainment data (2015b) for the years 2006-2014 was broken down by ethnicity and gender (Figure 1, below). This figure highlights the continuing underachievement of Black Caribbean and White and Black Caribbean students both male and female at GCSE level when compared with White British students despite an overall upward trend in achievement for all groups of students. Black Caribbean males and mixed White and Black Caribbean males had the lowest achievement rates in the years 2006-2013. The data for 2014 indicated a significant decline in achievement across all

groups; this decline was more pronounced for the Black Caribbean males and mixed White and Black Caribbean males. The gap between these groups and White British males narrowed a little: 18 down to 12 points and 13 down to 8 points in the years 2006-2014.

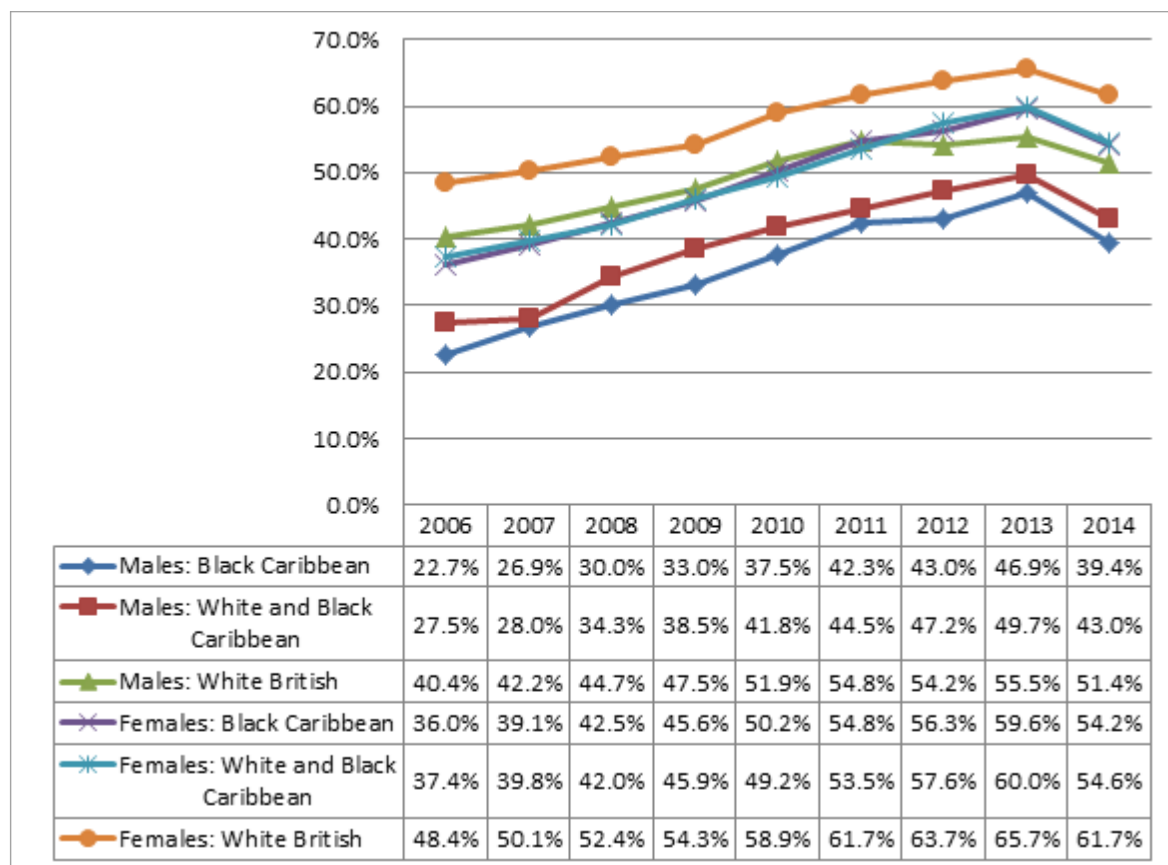


Figure 1: GCSE achievement trends by race and gender (Source: DfE, 2015b)

Level 2 achievement was also broken down by ethnicity and social disadvantage (Figure 22, Appendix A, p. 265). Students eligible for free school meals were designated eFSM and compared with the average achievement figures. The data showed marked differences between ethnicities. It can be seen from this figure that the impact of socio-economic status on achievement was also contingent upon ethnicity, demonstrating the intersectionality of race and socio-economic status. Of those eligible for free school meals (eFSM), Chinese students were the highest achieving, 40 percentage points above the lowest achieving White British

students at 28 per cent. The second lowest achieving group of students were mixed White and Black Caribbean students at 32 per cent followed by Black Caribbean students.

The 2014 level 2 achievement DfE data broken down by gender, socio-economic deprivation and ethnicity is shown in Figure 23 (Appendix A, p. 266). Chinese and Indian females eligible for free school meals outperformed all other groups of females in the same category, with 43 percentage points between the highest and the lowest scores. Chinese males eligible for free school meals outperformed their peers by up to 36 percentage points.

In summary, at GCSE level, despite upward trends in achievement, there was still a significant achievement gap when comparing Black Caribbean students and mixed White and Black Caribbean students with their White British counterparts. This gap persisted for at least the nine years analysed. In these figures, the intersectionality of socio-economic status and race can clearly be seen, as the impact of socio-economic status on achievement appears to depend upon a student's ethnicity.

DfE data (DfE, 2016) also provides evidence of students' destinations upon completing key stage 4. Figure 26 (Appendix A, p. 269) shows the percentage of 2012/13 key stage 4 cohort who went to or remained in, an education destination in 2013/14. This data compares the destinations of students of eight key ethnicities. The total percentage of young people remaining in post-16 education was high for all groups; however, there was a difference of six percentage points between the highest and lowest totals. At school sixth form, Chinese students had the highest participation rates, followed by Indian students. Black Caribbean and

mixed White and Black Caribbean students had the lowest participation rates, around 28 percentage points lower. At further education colleges, White British; Black Caribbean and mixed White and Black Caribbean students had the highest participation rates. This may well be due to admissions policies based upon students' GCSE achievements.

This academic achievement data showed clear evidence of the continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students. Although some steady improvements were evident, they were disappointingly slow.

Level 3 achievement data

Admission to university and the ranking of the university attended depends strongly on a student's actual academic achievement at age 18-19. This is measured by level 3 examinations taken at the end of key stage 5. The DfE gathers data and publishes statistics on level 3 exam achievement and student destinations. Key measures from this data were extracted and analysed and are presented below and in Appendix A, (p. 260). This data was used to form part of the rationale for this thesis.

To measure level 3 academic achievement, data provided by the DfE was obtained relating to students' level 3 attainments and students' destinations after completing A-levels or National Diplomas. This DfE data measured level 3 attainment by counting the number of students passing two or more A-levels at grade A-E (or equivalent) by age 19. This data was broken down by year and by various student characteristics such as gender and ethnic group.

The DfE level 3 achievement data (DfE, 2015a) was used to measure the percentage of students achieving two or more A-levels at grade A-E or equivalent by age 19 in 2014 by ethnicity and gender (Figure 24, Appendix A, p. 267). The highest performing gender was female: within this group, there was a 32-point difference between the highest and lowest percentages; Chinese and Indian females were at the top of this gender group and the White British and White and Black Caribbean females were at the bottom. Within the male gender group, the highest performing ethnic groups were Chinese and Indian students, with a 38-percentage point difference between the highest and lowest performing male ethnic groups. White and Black Caribbean and Black Caribbean male students had the lowest percentage qualified to Level 3 by age 19 (44 per cent and 49 per cent respectively).

The DfE data (DfE, 2015a) was used to produce a level 3 achievement table broken down by ethnicity, gender and eligibility for free school meals, used as a proxy for socio-economic deprivation (Figure 25, Appendix A, p. 268). The data indicated that poverty, when measured by eligibility for free school meals, had the greatest impact on White British students' percentage scores at level 3. Black Caribbean and White and Black Caribbean students were amongst the lowest achievers. Chinese and Indian students outperformed all other groups; this was also the case when they were eligible for free school meals, with up to 52 percentage points between the highest and the lowest scores. The intersectionality of socio-economic status and race can clearly be seen in this Level 3 data. Intersectionality and the use of eligibility for free school meals as a measure of poverty are discussed further in Intersectionality and anti-essentialism (p. 47).

The level 3 DfE data (DfE, 2015a) shows the trends in achievement over the period 2007-2014, broken down by ethnicity and gender (Figure 2 below). This data highlighted the changes in the proportions of students gaining level 3 qualifications over this period. All groups of students showed a steady percentage increase in gaining level 3 qualifications. The groups that showed the greatest improvements were Black Caribbean and White and Black Caribbean male students. However, they started from a low base and remained at the bottom of this table. Black Caribbean females showed a steady improvement in level 3 qualifications achieved and moved from four percentage points below to five percentage points above White British females and nine percentage points above White and Black Caribbean females. Black Caribbean males and White and Black Caribbean males have been at the bottom of this Level 3 achievement table for at least eight years.

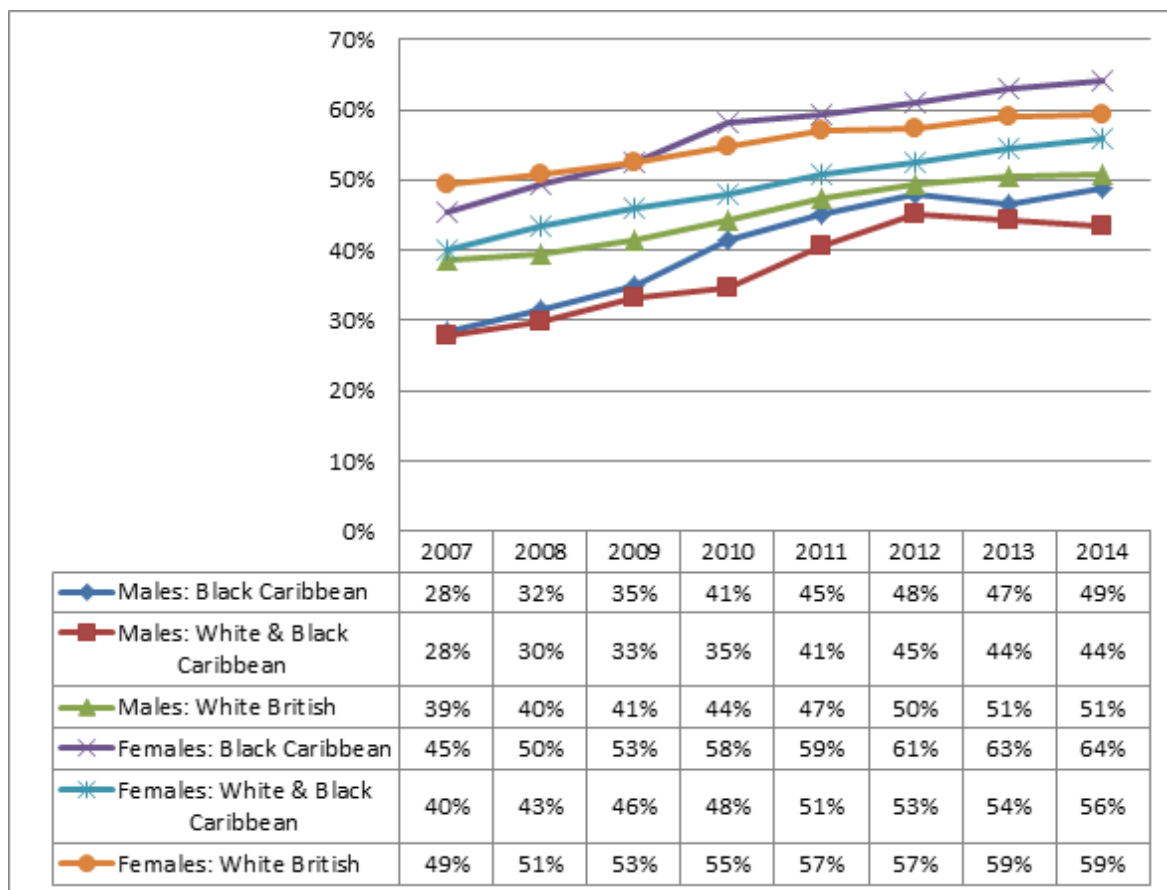


Figure 2: Level 3 achievement trends by ethnicity and gender (Source DfE, 2015a).

Progression and University admissions

A key measure of the achievement of African-Caribbean students is their level of success in gaining entry to the higher-ranking universities after gaining level 3 qualifications. DfE data (DfE, 2016) provided evidence of students' destinations upon completing further education. Certain races were successful and, in some cases, very successful in gaining entry to higher education, and particularly into the top third of higher education institutions, however, this could not be said for Black Caribbean students or White and Black Caribbean students. Most students went on to university or higher education institutions (HEIs). However, there was a marked difference between the percentages admitted to the top third of

universities and the percentages of students admitted to all other higher education institutions. For example, in 2013 44 per cent of Chinese students were admitted to the top third of universities whereas only 10 per cent of Black Caribbean students were admitted to this group of universities. Figure 27 (Appendix A, p. 270) shows level 3 qualified students' destinations in 2013 by ethnicity. The 'top third' of universities was defined according to the calculated mean of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) A-level tariff score of entrants (DfE, 2016). Bhattacharyya et al. (2003) noted that minority ethnic students are concentrated in the post 1992 modern universities.

The post-16 destinations for Black Caribbean students showed a similar pattern to that of the White British students, with 12-13 per cent moving into a sixth form college and 37-38 per cent moving into a school sixth form in 2013 (Figure 26, Appendix A, p. 269). However, in 2013 after their level 3 courses 57 per cent of White British students moved on to a higher education institution compared to 48 per cent of Black Caribbean students (Figure 27, p. 270).

DfE data showed that level 3 achievement for African-Caribbean male students was only 2 percentage points below that for White male students and for African-Caribbean female students 5 percentage points above that for White female students (Figure 24, Appendix A, p. 267). This seemed at odds with the fact that African-Caribbean students were much less successful than White students at gaining entrance to higher education (48 vs. 57 per cent), and did not reflect their academic achievement at level 3 (Figure 27, p. 270).

Overall, more female students started university in 2014 than male students. The gender balance in 2014 was most even for 'Asian or Asian British-Indian' students

with 49.5 per cent being male; whereas only 34 per cent of 'Black or Black British-Caribbean' university entrants were male (Figure 29, Appendix B, p. 273).

Data from 2014 shows significant percentage differences between genders and ethnicities in admissions to the top third of universities. Male 'Black or Black British – Caribbean' university entrants had the lowest proportion (12.3 per cent) when compared to other male university entrants and female 'Black or Black British – Caribbean' university entrants the second lowest proportion (24 per cent) when compared to other female university entrants (Figure 3, below).

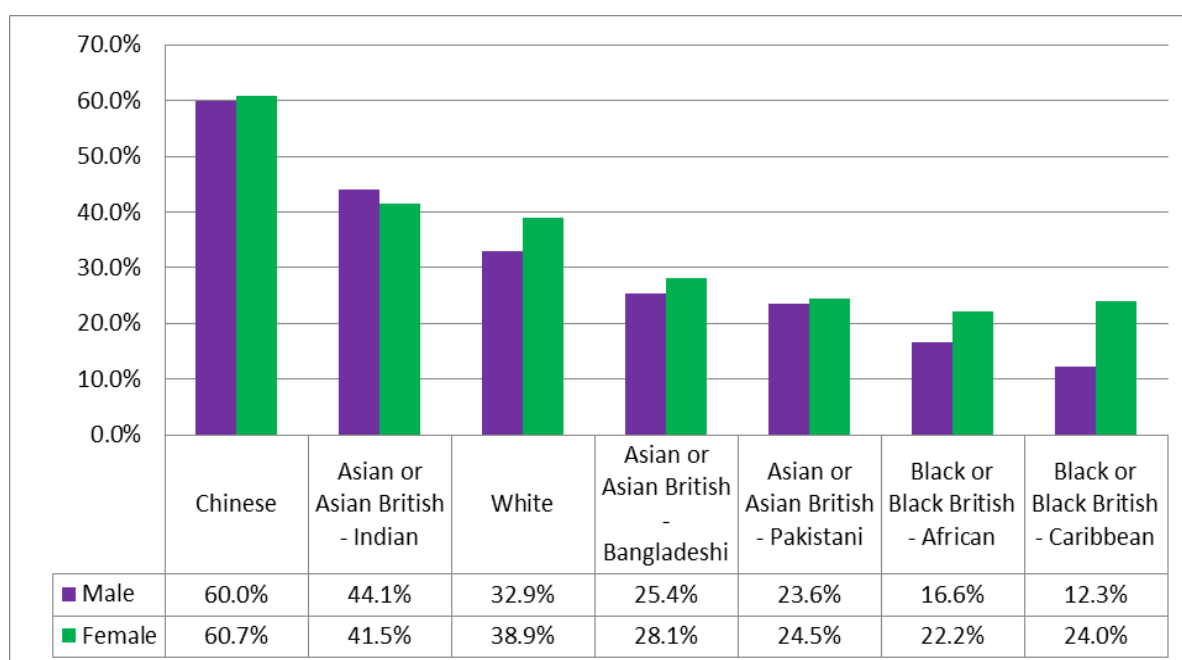


Figure 3: Gender ratios for 2014 top third university entrants by ethnicity (Source: HEIDI data set, Appendix B).

Level 3 achievement was measured quite broadly by the DfE data (2015a) as two A level passes or equivalent. Hence although a higher percentage of Black Caribbean female students achieved this compared with their White British counterparts (64 vs. 59 per cent, Figure 24, p. 267), they were still not as successful as White British female students at gaining entry to the top third of

universities, 24 vs. 39 per cent of university entrants of their ethnicity and gender (Figure 3).

In 2014 'Black or Black British – Caribbean' university entrants had the lowest proportion of admissions into the Russell group of universities at 5.3 per cent (Figure 30, Appendix B, p. 274) and virtually none of the students admitted to Oxford or Cambridge universities in 2014 were 'Black or Black British – Caribbean' (Figure 31, Appendix B, p. 275).

In the years 2011-14 the growth in the number of 'Black or Black British – Caribbean' male students admitted to all UK universities was low, at about one percentage point. During this period, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and African male students all made significant gains in the range of 18 to 60 percentage points (Figure 32, Appendix B, p. 276). The figure shows clearly the impact of the introduction of increased university fees in 2012 across all ethnicities.

In summary, for 'Black or Black British – Caribbean' university entrants a significant male/female gender imbalance (34 per cent compared to 66 per cent, respectively) was found, which highlighted that in 2014 African-Caribbean male students were not gaining admission into university in enough numbers. The 'Black or Black British – Caribbean' students who did gain university admission in 2014 were at the bottom of the admissions tables for the top third of universities, the Russell group of universities and for Oxford and Cambridge universities. In addition, the university admission figures for Black or Black British - Caribbean male students have remained mostly static for the four years 2010-2014. In the data presented in this section the intersectionality between race and gender can be clearly seen. The university admissions data presented reinforces the point

made by Cameron (2016) that very few African-Caribbean students gain access to the top universities.

Ontological perspective

My research was informed and shaped by my experiences as an African-Caribbean female who was educated wholly in the English education system, from primary and secondary through to further and higher education. Born in Jamaica, I moved to England with my family when I was three years old. I grew up during a time where there was a clear and constant message from the media and education institutions that I was not expected to achieve academically, and consequently was destined to become an unskilled factory worker. The outcome was that I left secondary school with just one CSE in human biology. However, this was not the expectation of my parents, especially my mother, who had moved to England to give her children the opportunity to gain a good education and improved life chances. During my secondary schooling, there was one teacher who was instrumental in shaping the course of my future. She supported me in the completion of my application form for college to undertake a pre-nursing foundation GCE programme. It was a time when African-Caribbean people were seen to have low academic aspirations and potential; this was portrayed in the media and ingrained into the schooling system. Since the 1960s African-Caribbean children have historically been labelled and identified as underachievers and as being educationally subnormal or academically less able than other students (Coard, 1971). I applied for nurse training and qualified as a state registered nurse and went on to qualify as a state registered health visitor. I changed careers and went into teaching and management in further education colleges. During my

first year I gained a certificate of education, then whilst working full-time I gained a masters' degree in education management and a second masters' in business administration (MBA).

Although I have always been aware of the issue of underachievement of African-Caribbean students as compared to other groups, it became more apparent when I changed careers and worked in a government department. In this role, I worked with Department for Education (DfE) achievement data at a detailed level such as shown in Figure 1 (p. 20) and so could appreciate the full extent of this crisis and came to realise that it had been a significant and long-standing issue. The message from concerned politicians and the media was real and the low achievement figures represented young peoples' lives, who in the main would not gain entrance to the same opportunities that other academic achievers would have. My role involved raising the educational achievement of all students; raising the quality of education and learning; and reducing the achievement gap between different groups of students. My interest in this area emerged from a need to develop a more in-depth and broader understanding of the underlying reasons for the underachievement of African-Caribbean students and why it continued to persist.

During my university studies, I had considered topics such as race, education and society, which focused my thoughts on the question of African-Caribbean student underachievement, how current education practice could be improved to address this issue, and the root causes of it. It was important for me to begin to understand why this waste of young potential continued and to understand how it could be influenced by structural issues outside of the individual's control. It was not an issue at an individual level but a collective phenomenon; involving more

factors than just poverty (Strand, 2014). Other groups of immigrants were achieving well and in some cases very well in the English education system, however, this could not be said for African-Caribbean students (Figure 27, Appendix A: Level 3 students' destinations in 2013 by ethnicity, p. 270). I wanted to understand the fundamental processes that may be impacting negatively on this group of students. What were the issues in their educational experiences and what factors contributed to this persistent waste of young talent?

Thesis outline

Chapter 2 presents the literature review, which explores possible causes for many African-Caribbean students' underachievement using critical race theory as an overarching framework. It explores the tenets of critical race theory – race as a social construct, racism as normal, interest convergence, intersectionality and anti-essentialism, and the unique voice of colour. Additionally, chapter 2 discusses power, education policy, previous research, social construct of underachievement, student attitude, critical pedagogy, and stereotyping. It then presents the research questions that form the basis of this thesis.

Chapter 3 presents the methodology for the study, including epistemology, critical race methodology, ethical considerations, research design, and data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 includes details of the conduct of the initial study, and for the main study the recruitment strategy, student profiles, the focus group questions, conduct of the focus groups, teacher profiles and questionnaires, and how the data was analysed. Chapter 5 is a presentation of the data including the students' and teachers' responses. Chapter 6 provides a discussion and analysis of this data, including students' academic aspirations, influences on student academic

achievement and education policy and practice. Chapter 7 presents the study conclusions, covering both structural and intrinsic influences on academic achievement, students' experiences and aspirations, intersectionality and educational experiences, education policy and micro-invalidation. Chapter 8 presents critical reflections on the research. Chapter 9 provides recommendations for methodology, for education policy and practice, and for further research.

Summary

This chapter has presented the rationale for investigating the continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students within the English education system, based upon personal experience, data published by the English Department for Education, higher education admissions data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, and previous research within this area. Additionally, the thesis is outlined, presenting the content of each chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature relevant to African-Caribbean student academic achievement. This research set out to investigate the academic progression of African-Caribbean students with a focus on students aged 16-19 and the possible factors that influence their achievement at this stage of their education. I was interested in discovering their aspirations, how these changed over time and with a focus on their aspirations related to learning and progression. I explored what lessons could be learned with reference to education policy and practice to provide a positive and successful education for this group of students. The study was interesting as well as challenging since although its focus was education, it required some understanding of concepts from related disciplines including sociology and politics, as well as economics and psychology.

Critical race theory was selected as the theoretical framework for this study, and its key tenets are outlined and discussed in this chapter. The history of English education was investigated, including government policy and previous research into further education and the achievement of African-Caribbean students.

Additionally, literature regarding students' attitude and aspirations, critical pedagogy, curricula, and stereotyping were investigated. This study of the literature was used to develop the research questions, presented at the end of the chapter.

Critical race theory

Through the initial literature review, it became clear that critical race theory could provide a highly relevant and insightful theoretical framework within which to discover and understand the key influences on the achievement and progression of African-Caribbean students. Class and poverty appear not to be able to explain the poor progression of African-Caribbean students with high socio-economic status (Strand, 2014). Critical race theory offered the ability to discover hidden discriminatory structures and practice in the education system. The critical race theory concepts of the social construct of race, the normality of racism, intersectionality and the unique voice of colour were of particular interest and seemed applicable to this study. Rollock et al. (2015, p.11) was useful as a guide in deploying aspects of this theoretical framework.

Critical race theory emerged from critical theory, defined as follows:

Critical theory seeks to understand the origins and operation of repressive social structures. Critical theory is the critique of domination. It seeks to focus on a world becoming less free, to cast doubt on claims of technological-scientific rationality and then to imply that present configurations do not have to be as they are.

(Gordon, 1995 p. 190)

Critical theory challenges the accepted and current social order, rather than merely aiming to understand and explain it (Gage, 1989). It attempts to discover and question the assumptions that may hinder the understanding of how dominant ideologies work. Such a critical approach emphasises the importance of power in society (Hammersley, 2007) and critical theory has been described by

Griffiths (2009) as challenging the validity and foundations of power and political structures.

Critical race theory has its origins in the Civil Rights and Critical Legal Studies movements from America, which placed emphasis on the social and political context in which judicial decisions were being made. Advocates of Critical Legal Studies believe that the basis of the law is arbitrary, founded on well-established power relationships and historic decisions that legitimise injustices (Taylor et al. 2009). Critical race theorists such as Bell (1980) and Delgado (1989) redefined racism to view it as structural and not the acts of individuals, suggesting that oppressive social structures continued to be maintained by those in positions of power.

As this thesis was concerned with the impact of race on the educational experiences of African-Caribbean students, insight was gained from Gage (1989) who argued that critical theory applied to race (critical race theory) could provide insights into the causes of the continuing underachievement of Black students as critical race theory places race at the centre of its discourse.

Critical race theory emerged during the 1970s when it was felt that a new approach was needed as the early civil rights gains were being eroded (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Critical race theory was applied to education research as an analytical framework in America in the 1990s because there was no rational theory of race to analyse and explain the continuing difference in achievement between ethnic minority groups (Hiraldo, 2010). Academics in Britain had challenged the inequalities in the education system and its outcomes for this group of students;

and in the 1980s critical race theory was applied to the British education system (Warmington 2012).

The aim of critical race theory is to investigate and understand issues from the perspective of groups that are marginalised, and race is one of critical race theory's main instruments (Gage, 1989). When relating critical race theory to this area of research, important concepts emerged, some of which intersected and impacted upon each other, for example, race and gender, and race and social class.

An advocate of critical race theory in education, Ladson-Billings (1998) noted that critical race theory offered a valuable insight into the long-term and multifaceted factors that contribute to the underachievement of ethnic minority students in the United States of America. Hence critical race theory may have the potential to offer insights into the continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students in the English education system. In addition to giving a voice to groups that are marginalised, Irizarry (2009) argued that critical race theory looked beyond the cultural deficit model that attributes blame to the individual, their families and their communities. Moreover, Trevino et al. (2008) noted that critical race theory challenged the accepted and current thinking on the issues surrounding Black students' achievement.

Gillborn (2005) concurs that race and critical race theory are important tools for analysing the issue of academic underachievement. Taylor et al. (2009) advocated that critical race theory is a powerful tool in understanding and explaining the daily lived experience of people from ethnic minority groups. Critical race theory can be used to investigate how and why race continues to be central to the social

order in Britain, the USA and elsewhere (Taylor et al. 2009; Blair 2008; Ladson-Billings 1998).

Tenets of critical race theory

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) and Ladson-Billings (2013) described five key tenets of critical race theory: first, that racism is normal, everyday, and a commonplace experience for most people of colour; second, the principle of interest convergence, which argues that white people enact measures promoting racial justice only when they benefit in equal measure; third, the assertion that race is a social construct, often related to physical traits determined by an extremely small proportion of any person's genetic makeup; fourth, the concepts of intersectionality and anti-essentialism, which reject classifications of individuals based upon single identities such as race, gender or class; and fifth, the unique voice of colour, which holds that oppressed peoples are uniquely competent to document and communicate theirs' and others' experiences of race and racism. These five tenets are discussed individually in greater detail below.

Rollock and Gillborn (2011) provided a useful summary of critical race theory in which they noted that scholars see race as socially constructed, and listed five central principles: The centrality of racism, which equates to racism as normal; white supremacy, which encompasses the processes through which racial privilege and subordination are perpetuated; the unique voice of colour; interest convergence; and intersectionality.

Race as a social construct

Critical race theory identifies race as a key concept in the analysis of social order and patterns of social behaviour. As argued by Ladson-Billings (2013), humans have constructed social categories and organisation that rely heavily on arbitrary genetic differences. Defining race, Morning (2014) noted that it could be viewed as a social construct that served to place individuals into certain groups, determined by physical characteristics, both positive and negative, with Black having negative connotations and White having positive connotations. This was supported by Williams (1991) who noted that simple skin colour had a profound effect on how individuals were perceived and treated; with a radical impact on that individual's feelings and thoughts including their self-identity. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) defined race as the product of social thoughts and relations which are not fixed, and which do not have an objective basis.

Whiteness was an informative concept for use in this analysis of the educational experiences of African-Caribbean students. Infused into the fabric of society, whiteness is a group identity based upon the dominant White race and is associated with many privileges often taken for granted by group members, with these members often exhibiting a racial bias against members of other groups (Lyubansky 2011).

In considering the origins of whiteness, Bonnett (1997) noted that over the last five hundred years it has evolved into a set of privileges and values that are taken for granted by White people, built upon a variety of supremacist moral, cultural or biological ideas, with non-White people marginalised and seen as inferior.

Leonardo (2002) suggested that whiteness as a practice has had a long and

enduring history which can be traced back over centuries. This history could be seen to provide a rationale for the present situation as it offers evidence of the legacy of stereotyping of Black people and their intellectual capacity, with a likely impact on present education policy and practice within the English education system. In considering the historical development of racial stereotyping, Graham and Robinson (2004) emphasised the long-lasting legacy of colonialism and enslavement, which entered British institutions including academic establishments in the 18th century and which formed the foundation of racism in Britain today. It was important to understand this foundation of today's racism, its purpose then and now, and the impact of its legacy on the educational experience of African-Caribbean students. Figure 4 below outlines some historical origins of the concept of whiteness.

1517	Reformation: the imagined superiority of whiteness was asserted to justify the enslavement of 'Blacks' and England's involvement in the slave trade.
1579	God is English appeared in print, in 'Euphues and his England' written by John Lyly. He also wrote that "the living God is only the English God".
1613	The introduction of the word 'White' applied to White people during a play by Thomas Middleton, "The Triumphs of Truth" (Taylor 2005).
1661	Council for foreign plantation: the first generic use of the term 'White' (Taylor, 2005).
1664	Robert Boyle combined scientific investigations of colour and the observations of racial differences to justify the distinctions between whiteness and all deviation from this ideal. The concept of whiteness infiltrated the European scientific and religious communities' processes: within these communities, popular scientific ideas were shared, and non-European scientific knowledge was excluded.
1670	A distinction was drawn between different forms of servitude: Black people were identified as slaves and White people as servants.
1672	John Lock provided a philosophical legitimacy for White superiority in his papers Two Treatises of Government, in which he provided a rationale for Black slavery in the colonies.
1758	There never was a civilised nation of any other complexion than White. (Hume, 2004)
1857	The introduction in the United States of America of the "one drop rule": the smallest proportion of non-White heritage meant exclusion from the category of White.

Figure 4: Origins of the concept of 'whiteness' (Source: Levine-Rasky, 2013)

In considering the nature of whiteness, Gillborn (2005) drew upon earlier works by Leonardo (2002), Frankenberg (1993) and Roediger (1994) to define and explain three key processes that work to perpetuate it: (1) discriminatory practices of White people not acknowledged as possible explanations for the unfair or unjust experiences of non-white ethnicities for example in education or employment; (2) the use of White as the norm in relation to which other ethnicities were compared and defined; and (3) the playing down of the continuing impact and legacy of past atrocities against non-White ethnicities.

Reflecting on whiteness, Ignatiev (1997) explained that it was important to acknowledge that not all White people are uniformly powerful, noting that whiteness does not exempt people from exploitation. Leonardo (2002) argued that it was essential to clarify the difference between the term whiteness, which is used in racial discourse, and the term White people, which represented a social construct of identity usually based on skin colour, since whiteness is infused with significant power and privileges. Furthermore, Leonardo (2002) and Blair (2008) highlighted the importance of understanding the cultural hegemony of White people and how it interacts with race.

Race played a pivotal role in this study which aimed to understand why the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students, identified by their race, continued to lag behind most other student groups within the English education system. The study sought to understand some of the underlying causes of racial discrimination in this education system, including exploring the concept of whiteness which is commonly used to define non-white races.

Racism as normal

Racism is ordinary, not aberrational - "normal science", the usual way society does business, the common, every-day experience of most people of colour in this country.

(Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 8)

Defining racism, Condor and Fenton (2012) explained that racism is founded on the prejudicial belief that races differ in their abilities and attributes and that some racial groups are inherently superior to others. They argued that racist beliefs may strongly influence behaviour both consciously and sub-consciously towards those

of a different race. Furthermore, Warren (2007) noted that racism is concerned with maintaining the situation as it is, with one group favoured over another.

It was clearly important to understand how racism may impact the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students. Importantly Boylorn (2011) argued that racism continues to be a significant fact of life for many, and so embedded that it is rarely openly questioned. He discussed the nature of the concept of invisible racism, embedded deeply into society's institutions to the extent of not being acknowledged as discrimination. Likewise, Leonardo (2002) also argued that racism is infused into every aspect of life and that this was the norm across the world where White was considered superior. For this study, it was important to understand why White is viewed as superior; with some suggesting that it appears to have created and infused itself with moral and legal powers. As hooks (1989) argued, the expression White supremacy more effectively expressed the exploitation of Black people than the word racism. It was important to distinguish between the subtle process of White supremacy as highlighted by hooks and overt racism. Gillborn (2005) noted that White interests were routinely privileged and that this went unremarked and unchallenged; and notably Dlamini (2002) argued that the racism of recent decades was more dangerous than that of the 1950s and 1960s as it had become more structurally entrenched in the economic system since the globalisation of capital. Furthermore, it had created structures that were often not recognised as racist, with aspects of the English education system being a possible site of such subtle, entrenched, yet invisible structural racism.

In considering so-called colour-blind education policies, Hooks and Miskovic (2011) argued that racial colour-blindness, which seeks to deny the relevance of racial hierarchies and the power that is embedded and endemic within them was a

potent manifestation of racism. Babbitt et al. (2016) also emphasised the fact that colour blindness has been used to reinforce privilege and preserve the situation as it is by ignoring racial inequalities. Jones (2016) noted that racial colour-blindness emphasised commonalities and not differences, allowing unconcealed and harmful racial inequalities to be ignored. As an example, Gillborn (2005) noted that an education policy of colour-blindness was in operation during the Conservative administration during the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, Williams (1997) defined the concept of colour blindness as a denial at worst and an ideological confusion at best, arguing that a person's colour clearly had a significant impact on how they were treated by others.

It may be that the use of the term racism prevented deeper questioning of the issues such as whiteness and structural factors within the English education system, enabling neglect of the issue of continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students (Figure 1, p. 20). For this study there was a need to look below the surface of tangible racism and to consider the discrimination that emanated from whiteness and to understand how whiteness operated within the English education system and social structures. This view was supported by Castagno (2008) who perceived whiteness as both structural and systemic in nature. It may be that the manifestation of racism has changed, in that blatant visual signs such as no Blacks are no longer evident. However, it continued to exist in the field of education, almost unnoticed, until research began to analyse and question why certain ethnicities continued to underachieve even when they were part of the same social class as their White peers. For example, Gillborn et al. (2012) and Carbado et al. (2013) highlighted the issue of achievement and

social class. Social class and its impact on African-Caribbean students' achievement is further discussed below in the section on Intersectionality.

In considering White dominance, Ansley (1997) described two forms of White supremacy, the first being the overt racism of White supremacist hate groups, which he considered to be less significant than the second, which was White people's overwhelming power and control of material resources and institutions such as education. Embedded within this, he found assumptions of White superiority and entitlement, with non-whites placed in positions of subordination.

The impact of whiteness on education and pedagogy could be significant, as power and control over what in education is considered relevant resides with those whose knowledge is considered to be important and relevant. As such, whiteness may have direct impact on areas of education policy and practice such as curriculum development, streaming of students and assessment practice. One example of this is the Eurocentric curriculum as discussed later under 'critical pedagogy and the curriculum'.

Micro-aggressions are subtle everyday racist psychological attacks that may cause long-lasting damage to the recipients, as defined by Pierce:

Subtle, stunning, often automatic and non-verbal exchanges which are 'put-downs' of Blacks by offenders.

(Pierce et al., 1978, p. 66)

Sue et al. (2007) argued that the very concept of micro-aggressions may be difficult to understand due to the unseen nature of such actions, and as such were unlikely to be perceived by those in power.

Micro-aggressions experienced by African-Caribbean students may have a significant impact on their self-confidence and may contribute to their low academic achievement. Over the last 30 years the term has evolved to include different marginalised groups, not just Black ethnic minorities. Sue et al. (2007) defined micro-aggressions as common everyday slights, insults and indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate humiliating messages to a person or group. Some micro-aggressions may be so subtle that neither the receiver nor the perpetrator may fully understand what was happening or the impact of the action. The definition has been widened to include other oppressed groups such as women and homosexuals.

Furthermore, Sue et al. (2007) defined three types of racial micro-aggression as follows: micro-assaults were defined as deliberate and intentional acts, considered to be the most overt form of both verbal and nonverbal micro-aggression. These included traditional forms of discrimination, for example serving a White person who is behind a Black person in a queue, making offensive sounds such as monkey noises, or making offensive gestures such as throwing bananas onto a football pitch when Black players are playing. Micro-insults refer to the use of nonverbal and verbal communication to demean an individual's racial heritage or identity, for example avoiding physical contact by not giving change directly to the individual but placing it on the counter, or not acknowledging a person in authority, but deferring to a subordinate. Micro-invalidations denote situations, communication or environmental cues that subtly exclude, negate or nullify the thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person of colour. For example, a Eurocentric curriculum which focuses on European history and culture subtly excluding people of colour. This is further discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

In considering the three types of racial micro-aggression, Sue and Constantine (2007) considered that micro-invalidations were the most insidious and damaging form of micro-aggression to people of colour, as they directly attacked their racial reality. For example, micro-invalidations aim to nullify the way groups with different traits (such as being from an ethnic minority group) experience the world, replacing it with the dominant White racial reality. Sue (2010) argued that the power to impose such a reality upon marginalised groups represented the ultimate form of oppression. Considering the impact of such micro-invalidations, DeAngelis (2009) claimed that the Black students' experience of education became one of disenfranchisement.

In the context of this research, of all the micro-aggressions discussed, micro-invalidations may be most likely to be of the greatest significance as African-Caribbean students are part of an education system or process that may afford them little if any validation of their self-worth as individuals or of the value of their communities. Hence, in the educating and socialising process of marginalised groups within the English education system, micro-invalidations may play a key role in contributing to the underachievement of members of those groups such as African-Caribbean students.

Interest Convergence

Bell (1980) argued that white people typically promoted policies of racial equality only when it was in line with their own interests. As an illustration of this principle, Bell argued that the US Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), in which segregation in public schools was declared unconstitutional, this seemed not to be motivated by a desire to redress black

suffering under racial segregation, but instead to improve the US's international image during the Cold War. As noted by Bell

Most racial remedies, however, when measured by their actual potential, will prove of more symbolic than substantive value to blacks.

(Bell, 1992 p 646)

Driver (2011) argued that the interest-convergence thesis can offer valuable insights but suggested that it should not be viewed as either flawless or all-encompassing. He admired how legal scholars showed how domestic events could not be viewed in isolation without considering the surrounding international context but noted that this thesis is regularly cited uncritically as a kind of received wisdom. He is concerned that the thesis underestimates the power of black people to create change on their own behalf, that it offers a conspiratorial view of the world, and that the thesis argues that it requires courage to see and acknowledge how the real world operates, dismissing those who disagree with its conclusions as uninformed and naïve.

Litowitz (1997) found interest convergence a strange thesis. He noted that in *Brown versus Board of education* (1954) the court's decision does not mention the Cold War or benefits of desegregation to the white majority. Additionally, Litowitz asked why whites were so resistant to desegregation and affirmative action if they stood to benefit equally from this legislation?

Intersectionality and anti-essentialism

The term intersectionality was introduced in 1986 by Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, Professor of law, who considered the situation of Black women in the workplace,

and violence against Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Adewunmi interviewed Crenshaw about intersectionality in 2014:

I wanted to come up with an everyday metaphor that everyone could use.... so many of the antecedents to it are as old as Anna Julia Cooper, and Maria Stewart in the 19th century in the US, all the way through Angela Davis and Deborah King.

(Crenshaw in Adewunmi, 2014, p. 1)

Crenshaw argued that it was important to examine gender and feminism through a lens that looks at race. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) explained that intersectionality examines the combination of different attributes such as race gender and class and considers how they interplay and become separate disadvantaging factors which may intersect at different points to create different power relationships.

One possible negative impact of intersectionality if it is overused, is that it may become so broad that it no longer carries any power and moves away from its original purpose of highlighting the impact of race and racism on marginalised groups and the quest for social justice (Bilge, 2013; Collins, 2015). Further to this, Delgado argued that:

Intersectionality can easily paralyse progressive work and thought because of the realisation that whatever unit you choose to work with, someone may come along and point out that you forgot something.

(Delgado, 2010, p. 1264)

In addition, Dlamini (2002) argued that socio-economic status was an important influence on achievement, but that discussion about racism and White privilege

was often undermined by the introduction of other forms of oppression, for example, oppression based on gender or socio-economic status.

Previous literature, for example Strand (2010), Bhattacharyya et al. (2003) and DfE data (2015a, 2015b) suggested that socio-economic status and gender may have an impact on students' achievement. It was therefore necessary in this study to explore the intersectionality between these two attributes as well as race and the influences that may impact these relationships. Socio-economic status continues to be one of the factors that influence students' achievement. However, evidence from the literature review suggested that socio-economic status has far less influence than race on the achievement of African-Caribbean students.

Importantly, Vincent et al. (2012a), Blunden (2004) and McNamara-Horvat (2003) noted that middle-class African-Caribbean students achieved less well academically than middle-class White students. If this could not be fully explained using socio-economic status, the question arose as to what other structural issues may explain this underachievement. Notably, Strand (2011) suggested that social class was not sufficient in explaining the achievement gaps between different groups of students, particularly between African-Caribbean and White British students. However, Strand (2011) did not identify racism as a direct issue, or the question of how socio-economic status may influence the achievement of middle-class African-Caribbean students.

In discussing the impact of socio-economic status on academic achievement, Gillborn et al. (2012) and Carbado et al. (2013) argued that African-Caribbean students performed less well academically than others of the same socio-economic status. Interestingly, Vincent et al. (2012b) discussed the impact of socio-economic status on students' achievement using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus,

field and capital. In this instance habitus related to the students' parents' identity, actions and choices; field referred to the field of education; and capital referred to the cultural capital the parents themselves had gained through education and achievement. Vincent et al. argued that when Black families held such capitals, these were often not seen as legitimate or seen to be of lesser value by White people in positions of power. For example, Figure 30 (Appendix B, p. 274) indicates that in 2014 a far smaller proportion of Black or Black British - Caribbean university entrants were accepted into the Russell group of universities than White university entrants. Moreover, as outlined in a recent white paper from the British government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2016), the English government has shifted its focus onto the achievement of White working-class male students, who they see as being at the bottom of the achievement table. Indeed, Gillborn et al. (2012) suggested that the government's focus on social class has effectively removed race from the discourse, placing White working-class students at the centre of policy debate and development. Similarly, Rhamie (2012) argued that in the rush to address the underachievement of White working-class students, it was important that the achievement of African-Caribbean students was not ignored. Notably, Gillborn et al. (2012) highlighted the intersectionality of race and socio-economic status and how socio-economic status may have been used to diminish the importance of race, racism and whiteness in the context of educational achievement.

Clearly socio-economic status continues to be important when considering students' achievement; however, middle-class African-Caribbean students continue to be at the bottom of the achievement tables as shown in Figure 20 (Appendix A, p. 263). This figure clearly shows a marked difference in the achievement between

middle-class students of differing races, suggesting that African-Caribbean students are not achieving their full potential.

Furthermore, Strand (2008), using socio-economic classification (SEC) as a measure, noted that when the data was examined closely, it revealed that there was continuing underachievement amongst African-Caribbean students from high SEC homes where there were high parental aspirations and a high academic self-concept. The attainment of these students was significantly lower than for White British students with similar characteristics. Vincent et al. (2013) noted that a person's race had a significant impact on that person's experience of socio-economic status, and how they were perceived and treated. Socio-economic status, in this case, had a clear intersection with race. For African-Caribbean students this is very evident in Figure 18, Figure 19 and Figure 20 in Appendix A (p. 261) which show mean normal score at age 11, 14 and 16 by ethnic group for students of lower, middle and upper socio-economic status.

It appeared that African-Caribbean students' socio-economic status is undermined by racism and for this reason, this research focussed specifically on race. The impact of the intersectionality of socio-economic status and race on the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students is clearly apparent in the DfE data (Figure 23 and Figure 25, Appendix A, p. 266) in which African-Caribbean students' race appears to have a much greater impact on their academic achievement than their socio-economic status. In this thesis, socio-economic status is included when analysing the differences in achievement between groups of students. However, poverty was not investigated in detail as an influencing factor on academic achievement since race appeared to have a more significant impact on the achievement of African-Caribbean students.

Figure 18 (Appendix A, p. 261) highlights the fact that all student groups in the socio-economic status bottom quintile are underachieving. For students of higher socio-economic status, the evidence reveals that Black Caribbean students continue to underachieve and remain at the bottom of the table (Figure 19 and Figure 20, Appendix A, p. 262). This data shows that socio-economic disadvantage is a significant issue in England and intersects with several other factors, for example, power and access to resources such as education. However, race appears to be a persistent factor in the low achievement of African-Caribbean students. Additionally, Strand's research (2011) and Vincent et al. (2012a) highlighted the limitations of social class in explaining the ethnic achievement gap in education.

Many studies, including the DfE achievement data, use the student characteristic 'eligibility for free school meals' as a proxy for socio-economic disadvantage. Recent research has highlighted that this is a crude measure, but provides some reassurance on its use:

It is certainly the case that whilst the eFSM measure may not capture everyone from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds it is nevertheless a good measure of identifying only children living in socio-economically disadvantaged households.

(Taylor, 2017, p. 19)

However, figures for students not receiving school meals, provided as part of the DfE data set, are not useful for assessing the achievement of students from households of higher socio-economic status as argued by Gillborn and Rollock (2010):

It is certainly not the case that non-eFSM equates to 'middle class' in a sense that would be widely understood.

(Gillborn and Rollock, 2010, p. 162)

This thesis avoids using eligibility for free school meals as a proxy for socio-economic status wherever possible.

Unique voice of colour

Delgado and Stefancic (2017) highlighted the importance of the notion of a unique voice of colour. They argued that people from minority ethnic groups have valuable knowledge and experience of racial oppression that their white counterparts are unlikely to have learned or experienced and stated that this gives people of colour a competence to communicate matters related to race and racism to others. This unique voice of colour is the foundation of the storytelling technique commonly used by critical race theory researchers to highlight inequalities in society. Storytelling is often used by critical race scholars to illustrate principles relating to race and social justice (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

We define the counter-story as a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society).

(Solórzano and Yosso, 2002, p. 32)

Solórzano and Yosso identified three general forms of storytelling: personal or autobiographical, in which researchers recount their own experiences of racism; biographical stories relating to other people; and composite stories that draw from

data collected and use composite characters to relate the experiences of people of colour.

Ladson-Billings (2013) explained that stories are written from a perspective or point of view. Stories drawn from the experiences of people of colour can become “counter-stories” if what they tell is significantly different from the stories of the White majority.

The African proverb says, “Until lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter.”

(Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 41)

Counter-storytelling is an important component of critical race theory, with Delgado and Stefancic (2017) noting that counter-storytelling can have a valid destructive function in challenging dominant ideologies. Delgado and Stefancic argued in addition that counter-storytelling provides a powerful vehicle for groups or individuals that are silenced or not part of the dominant group. Although Delgado and Stefancic were critiquing the legal system within the USA, counter-storytelling may be equally useful in challenging English education policy and practice.

However, Ladson-Billings (2013) warns that storytelling is often misused by researchers in an exhibitionist way to vent their frustrations with racism but without making principled argument, and hence not advancing understanding of the operation of law or policies. Furthermore, Litowitz (1997) criticised storytelling for playing upon the emotions, bypassing reason, and consequently having the potential to convince readers to adopt a point of view without a sound, rational basis. He further argued that storytelling is not inherently liberating but instead is

neither liberal nor conservative, neither constraining nor freeing. Farber and Sherry (1997) raised concerns about stories because of their potential to be atypical, inaccurate, or incomplete, distorting the debate. Additionally, they argue that the thesis of the minority scholars' unique "voice of colour" can impede discussion between radical and mainstream scholars. They also note that the meaning or impact of personal autobiographical stories is hard to debate due to their personal nature.

Kennedy (1989) analysed the racial distinctiveness thesis promoted by critical race theory scholars, which argues that ethnic minority scholars have a distinctive voice derived from a perspective on the world different to that of their white colleagues, having experienced racial oppression. He found that white scholars were commonly seen as outsiders by black activists with little or nothing to contribute intellectually to the study of race relations and argued that Delgado, a prominent critical race theory academic, was promoting negative racial stereotypes of white scholars. Kennedy also noted the troubling consequences of valuing an ethnic minority scholar's voice as an intellectual credential, citing the difficulty of defining a black perspective.

Marxist criticism

Some educational theorists, for example Cole (2009), take a Marxist standpoint with its emphasis on economics and the ownership of the means of production and the relationship between different economic groups, with little or no acknowledgement of the impact of race. It can be argued that race has a significant influence (Solomos and Back, 1995), despite Cole (2009) having attempted to dismiss critical race theory's relevance in interpreting contemporary

race issues. In his defence of Marxism, Cole also fails to acknowledge the importance of whiteness and its implications. Additionally, Cole argued that critical race theory excludes attributes such as gender and disability, however, he appeared to neglect intersectionality and the impact race has on these attributes.

Power and marginalisation

Critical race theory seeks to understand power and how it may be used to marginalise ethnic minorities. Hence the concept of power was found to be an important issue within this literature review. It was important to consider the concept of power in its many forms and how it is constructed and maintained within education and its possible impact on African-Caribbean students. In addition, this literature review sought to understand how power may be abused, for example through racial micro-aggressions such as micro-invalidations (Racism as normal, p. 41).

French and Raven (1959) identified five forms of power: legitimate power that resulted from having been elected by another who has surrendered some rights in a controlled manner, for example individuals who have been appointed to a position of authority, such as teachers; reward power that resulted from having the capacity to reward individuals for achieving something they value; coercive power based upon the fear that the person with the power can punish others; expert power based upon the belief that one person's set of knowledge and skills is superior to another's, for example, those individuals that control the content of the curriculum; and reference power conferred by another who believes that the person in power is worthy, for example, elected politicians and government that control education policy.

In relation to power in the English education system, Gillborn (2008) argued that the continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students in the education process was due to a conspiracy and not a coincidence. He suggested that those in power tended to behave in such a way as to maintain their position and power. From a more general viewpoint, Ladson-Billings (1998) noted that one of the vehicles used by those in power to maintain their position was the education system. To understand power and its significance within the field of education, it was essential to consider some additional concepts, including cultural hegemony and cultural capital.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) defined cultural hegemony as the political or cultural dominance or authority of one group over others. This dominance was explored in depth by the French sociologist Bourdieu (1977) whose construct of habitus brought together fundamental sociological concepts including social capital, cultural capital and social class. Bourdieu moved away from merely considering how individuals navigate the current social order to consider critically the hidden rules that control and maintain the social world to the advantage of selected groups and individuals. Bourdieu (1977) outlined the concepts of symbolic power, which was symbolic and cultural, exercised by those in a dominant position; and doxa, which he used to denote the aspects of a society that are taken for granted and not questioned. Inspired by Bourdieu's work, McNamara-Horvat (2003) demonstrated how government symbolic power may be used to create discriminatory education policies which were then enacted to establish and maintain discriminatory practices.

These concepts helped to clarify the dominant political and cultural influences within the educational experience of African-Caribbean students. Both the political

and cultural hegemony of the dominant White group within the education system may be significant factors that affect the achievement of African-Caribbean students. Bourdieu's concept of social capital was useful in helping to understand how power may be experienced by different groups, for example, the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students when compared to White students. As highlighted by Strand's (2014) achievement data for middle-class students (Figure 20, Appendix A, p. 263), not all social or educational capital is of the same value.

English education policy

As indicated in Chapter 1, in the discussion of the context and data relevant to this study, Government education policy is likely to have a significant influence on students' achievement. This section, therefore, reviews literature that has discussed recent English education policies and their impact on minority ethnic groups.

Reviewing the literature on the continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students highlighted several issues. Over the last 40 years, studies in this area have been numerous and, in many cases, have led to short term fixes (Coard, 1971; Education Commission 2003; UK Government 2007; REAL 2007). Tomlinson (2008) noted that during the 1960s there was the passing of the first immigration law. Its purpose was to limit immigration from the Commonwealth, mainly focused on Black and Asian people and to aid assimilation of these immigrants into English society. Education policy changed during the 1970s with compensatory interventions that treated the Black and minority ethnic students as the problem.

The concept of community cohesion was further used to highlight differences between ethnic communities. Tomlinson (2008) stated that fear and defensiveness

resulted in blaming the immigrants themselves for community break-down, segregation and educational underachievement. Thus, the dominant ideology in education tended to blame the continuing underachievement of Black students on the students themselves (Ladson-Billings, 2007). However, Tomlinson (2008) identified structural issues as important factors which were omitted from many studies of underachievement.

English education policy was further explored by Gillborn (2005) who emphasised the importance of looking beyond the superficial rhetoric of policies and practices. He went on to examine education policy using the criteria: priorities, beneficiaries and outcomes. In considering education policy priorities, he questioned how education policy was being driven. He highlighted the fact that there had been a variety of measures to address the issue of race relations and race, starting with post-war ignorance and neglect, followed by periods of overt assimilationist and integrationist policies. He noted that policies had changed over time in attempts to address ethnic diversity within the education system, but that fundamentally such initiatives were always at the margins of policy.

Gillborn (2005) described the position taken by the different political parties. The Conservative administration during the 1980s and 1990s insisted that the only fair approach was 'colour-blind'. The Labour administration of 1997 acknowledged race inequality as an unacceptable feature of the education system and even cited critical research that had raised questions about teachers' roles in producing race inequalities in schools. Gillborn further highlighted the lack of importance given to race equality in contemporary education policy, citing the Department for Education's five-year strategy in which ethnic minority students were given a single mention as low-achieving minority ethnic groups. He suggested that

notwithstanding the political persuasion of the serving political party, race equality had constantly to fight for legitimacy as a significant topic for education policy-makers.

In considering education policy beneficiaries, Gillborn (2005) highlighted the impact of education policy priorities in terms of who the beneficiaries were and who lost out. He noted that education policy in England since 1988 had been focused on a drive to raise standards as measured in quantitative achievement data and aimed to increase attainment for all groups of students but highlighted that students from minority ethnic backgrounds had not all experienced this to the same degree, Wright (2013) made a similar observation. In considering education policy beneficiaries, Gillborn asked what the effects of the policy would be and went on to note that many ethnic minority students continued to underachieve. Both Gillborn's (2005) and Tomlinson's (2008) analyses of the previous and current English education policies identified significant issues with these policies and highlighted the lack of focus in past research on structural factors that may have had a significant impact on the underachievement of African-Caribbean students.

An important concept to consider is how this situation relates to and addresses the United Nations convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC) and the UK government's position. The UNCRC: Article 29 - Aims of Education 1 states that:

Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; ... and (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values,

for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own.

(Zaman, 2010, p. 121)

The Government is fully committed to children's rights and the continued implementation of the UNCRC to make the Convention a reality for all children and young people living in the UK.

(Zaman, 2010, p. 4)

This government statement appears to suggest that it is their aim to provide an educational environment that allows every child to develop his or her abilities to their fullest potential, and that respects their cultural identity. This is pertinent to the discussion of exam tiers in the section on the social construct of underachievement and to the discussion of the impact of a Eurocentric curriculum in the discussion of critical pedagogy and the curriculum.

Previous research into further education

While a large body of research looked at the early years of education, as well as higher education, it was harder to find specific research studying Black students' achievement during the post-16 transitional years leading into higher education and employment in England. Significant gaps were found within the body of literature, especially older literature that did not investigate critically the underachievement of Black students (for example Ocloo, 2002) or record students' personal experiences of education. However, Graham and Robinson (2004) discussed underachievement of Black students, calling it a catastrophe, and suggested that there had been a lack of research into their underachievement

within British society. Notably, most of the research on the underachievement of Black students has been conducted in the United State of America (USA), for example Ladson-Billings (2007). Graham and Robinson argued that one of the reasons for this was that the existence and practice of racism within British ideology was commonly denied. Additionally, they argued that other identities were often considered to be of equal importance to race, for example, gender, social class and disability. These findings were also supported by Gillborn (2008) and Tomlinson (2008).

Recent research into the educational experiences of African-Caribbean students in further education has been limited, with little direct focus on further education students. The research undertaken by Ocloo (2002) mainly focused on Black staff within the further education sector and their experiences. Ocloo's main findings that relate to the progression of African-Caribbean students in further education were that Black staff were under-represented within the further education sector; that the percentage of Black students has increased in further education over recent years and that overall Black learners continue to underachieve compared with White students. However, the study did not seek to record the educational experiences of African-Caribbean students.

Bhattacharyya et al. (2003) researched into minority ethnic attainment and participation in education and training and supported the findings of Strand (2014) by showing that the disparity in achievement between ethnic groups increased significantly over the course of schooling, and by highlighting the fact that there was greater inequality in attainment between ethnic groups after their time in compulsory education than there was at entry to school. Bhattacharyya et al. (2003) further argued that the disparities in attainment are complex and cannot

be linked to any one factor. However, they failed to address structural issues such as government educational policy, for example teacher assessment and the selection of students for lower GCSE exam tiers. Strand (2012) later identified several issues with education practice, for example the under-representation of African-Caribbean students relative to their White British peers in the entry to the higher GCSE exam tiers with the opportunity to achieve A*-B grades. This issue is discussed further in 'the social construct of underachievement' (p. 64).

Bhattacharyya et al (2003, p. 22) also failed to address possible issues such as the importance of inclusive or culturally relevant curricula but highlighted the issue of teaching based on 'unfamiliar cultural norms', this terminology is ambiguous because it is not clear to whom the cultural norms would be unfamiliar. However, they did highlight the fragmentary attempts to address the issue of students' attainment by individual schools, for example in a good practice school:

Teachers spoke to pupils with respect and avoided the use of verbal put downs.

(Bhattacharyya et al., 2003, p. 23)

The research undertaken by national union of students (NUS, 2011) focused on the educational experience of Black students in further and higher education. However, 72 per cent of participants were higher education students. Therefore, the findings mainly covered the views of higher education students, and additionally included the experiences of both British and international students. Hence the term Black in this NUS report referred to a wide group of people, some of whom would have had a different legacy and experience of education compared to the participants in this thesis. Although not fully representative of the participants in this thesis, there were important issues raised that have relevance

to this study, for example the Eurocentric curriculum and stereotyping. This NUS study made effective use of the students' voices to highlight their educational experiences.

The social construct of underachievement

The underachievement of African-Caribbean students has remained an entrenched issue over the past 60 years within the English education system (Demie, 2003; Ofsted, 2002). This section reviews the literature that discusses possible explanations for the achievement gap between White British and African-Caribbean students.

This achievement gap is likely to have had significant negative consequences, not only for the individuals and groups but for the wider community. These continuing consequences are likely to include lower economic earning power, lower standards of living and limited life chances for African-Caribbean students and their children (Tackey et al., 2011). Furthermore, it has been highlighted that there have been losses and costs to the economy (Johnson & Kossykh, 2008; Owen et al., 2000).

The proportion of African-Caribbean students who continue in education has been high, but they remain amongst the lowest achievers in the post-16 education sector. This is not to deny that there has been some improvement. The DfE data supported this, showing an improving trend in the number of students gaining level 3 qualifications (Figure 2, p. 25). However, as shown earlier, there still remained a significant difference between the proportion of White British students and the proportion of African-Caribbean students moving on to the top third of universities (Figure 3, p. 27).

Coard (1971) suggested that the British school system was making African-Caribbean students educationally subnormal by categorising many of them as educationally subnormal or less able than other students. Importantly, Mirza (1998) suggested that the issue of Black underachievement is socially constructed and not a consequence of biology. The ideology of a biological impact on achievement has been discredited for a variety of reasons, outlined by Mirza, who dismissed historical explanations for the underachievement of this group, including the suggestion that African-Caribbean students had a lower than average intelligence quotient (IQ) and that they had low academic aspirations. These assumptions can be traced to historical roots in the 16th century with the introduction of scientific racism (Runia, 2015), which advocated the superiority of White Europeans.

Over the last 40 years, there has been a growing body of research and debate as to the reason for the continuing underachievement of Black students, for example Coard (1971). Factors proposed to explain this underachievement included social class, teachers' attitudes, parental attitudes towards education, continuing school exclusion, lack of an inclusive curriculum that fails to acknowledge Black people's contribution to society, defective family structures and even defective characteristics of Black children (Vincent et al., 2012a).

Gillies (2008) suggested that the issue of academic underachievement had become a label for the students instead of being a defect of the education system. Benskin (1994) and Wright (1987) argued that the factors that were contributing to the unequal attainment of Black children were situated within the educational structures themselves and not the students' family or culture. An issue that was highlighted by Reay and Mirza (1997) was the virtually invisible dominance of

whiteness in mainstream schooling. Tizard et al. (1988) further suggested that low expectations of students by teachers, a Eurocentric curriculum and stereotypes held by teachers may play an important role in contributing to the underachievement of African-Caribbean students.

The impact of early educational experience on the achievement of African-Caribbean students has been well documented over several years by a number of research studies (Wright, 1987; Tizard et al., 1988; Benskin, 1994; Gillies, 2008; Strand, 2010, 2011 and 2012; Vincent et al., 2012a; and Kingdon and Cassen 2010) which argued that the ongoing underachievement of Black children in this instance was not situated within the individual student or their families but within the English educational structures.

Strand's important research over several years evaluated the impact of factors such as students' social class, family structure, attitude to learning and students' achievement. His research highlighted the impact over time of English education policy on African-Caribbean students, demonstrating how their academic outcomes became progressively worse. He argued that both genders' academic progress was impeded and effectively diminished as they progressed through the English education system. He provided evidence to demonstrate that school quality did not have a great influence on the achievement gap between African-Caribbean and White British students, as the evidence showed that this gap also occurred in good schools, suggesting that it was a systemic issue; that is, an issue within the education system itself. He found that a gap in achievement was not present at age four but became evident at age seven and was even more marked at age 11. He noted that the gap was even more pronounced in the more able African–

Caribbean students. This finding contrasted with Cameron's view (2016) that the issue of underachievement was found in schools with poor teaching quality.

Strand (2011) contextualised African-Caribbean students' underachievement by analysing several factors such as social class of students' homes, maternal education and other factors. He argued that none of the factors he analysed provided an adequate explanation for the continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students. He further suggested that the achievement gap observed at age 14 could be partly attributed to the pre-existing differences at age 11. He emphasised that a key focus should be on the primary school phase since the achievement gap arises during, and is apparent at the end of, primary school. He concluded by arguing that in-school factors play a critical role, including teachers' attitudes and perceptions of African-Caribbean students' academic ability.

Strand's (2012) analysis of a longitudinal study of young people in England was used to establish and highlight several further concerns, one of which was that African-Caribbean students were being systematically under-represented relative to their White British peers in the entry to the higher GCSE exam tiers with the opportunity to achieve A*-G grades. He argued that this differential entry to exam tiers provided an insight into teachers' expectations, which may contribute to the underachievement of African-Caribbean students, particularly in mathematics. He suggested that the act of placing African-Caribbean students into lower tiers where the highest grade attainable was a C grade may be one symptom of unrealistically low teacher expectations. He argued that the act of placing students into tiers needed to be more than just a technical decision, but instead needed to be placed within the wider context of teachers' perceptions and the social consequences of assessment. These points were also supported by Gillborn (2010)

who further questioned the practice of using only teacher assessment at age five to predict students' future achievement. He suggested that the danger of this practice was that its colour-blind rhetoric may hide the racial stereotyping of teachers' perspectives and make the assessment process appear to be scientifically rigorous.

Further to Strand's (2012) argument regarding the under-representation of African-Caribbean students in higher tier exams and its impact, Figure 28 (Appendix A, p. 271) highlights the possible dangers of using past academic achievement at age 16 to predict future academic achievement. This figure suggests that GCSE performance was a poor predictor of Level 3 performance, particularly if ethnicity is not considered.

To investigate whether achievement at GCSE could be used to predict Level 3 attainment Figure 28 (p. 271) compares the percentage of students by ethnicity achieving five or more GCSE grades A*-C including English and mathematics at age 16 in 2010/11 with the percentage who went on to gain a Level 3 qualification by age 19 in 2013/14, broken down by ethnic group. This figure shows that most ethnic groups show a higher proportion achieving a Level 3 than the proportion that achieved five or more GCSE at grades A*-C including English and mathematics; with gains between four and twelve points. However, two ethnicities, White British and mixed White and Black Caribbean students, show a decrease in these proportions. From this data, if teachers try to predict Level 3 attainment based upon GCSE achievement, they may underestimate the likely attainment for students from many ethnic groups.

Student attitude and aspirations

Law et al. (2012) suggested that educational and career aspirations were important and may be linked to high levels of aspirations for achievement in life. They argued that there was no strong link between being male and Black and having low educational aspirations and further claimed that these students' aspirations were as high as those of other groups. Additionally, DeAngelis (2009) and Sue et al. (2007) argued that Black male students needed self-belief in their ability to achieve well, but that they may have an internalised low expectation of self. Noguera (2003) found that students held a range of differing attitudes towards their educational experiences. Many were impacted by social factors such as how they were perceived in the media and the education system. Similarly, Tikly et al. (2006) suggested that Black male students lacked belief in their own ability to achieve, due to teacher attitude and media portrayal of them as having a lack of interest in education. Furthermore, Payne et al. (2009) noted that despite Black males having positive attitudes towards education their experience of the education process was negative.

It has been suggested that Black students may not see themselves as clever or able academically. Whiting (2009) discussed the impact of a student's internal locus of control which is an individual's belief that they are responsible for their own success; however, this did not mean that external factors were not important. Tyson (2002) argued that Black elementary age students began school excited and interested in learning while Harmon (2001) suggested that students became less interested in education by the age of nine to ten years old:

They... expect you to never get anything right or to be the best... It was like they purposely did not want us to succeed.

(Harmon, 2001, p.71)

Other students in the same study highlighted the way in which Black students were portrayed in the media as violent, disrespectful and unintelligent, in turn influencing how they were perceived and treated in school.

Therefore, for this thesis it was very important to examine the assumption that African-Caribbean students and their communities may lack a positive attitude to education and have low academic aspirations. The literature highlighted the barriers that students may face but also showed that individuals are able to take some control notwithstanding external influences, having a positive attitude towards their education and positive aspirations for the future.

Critical pedagogy and the curriculum

Pedagogy is a key aspect of the students' learning environment. Pedagogy was therefore explored through literature relating to critical pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy and curriculum design. Freire (1970), considered to be one of the foundation texts for the development of critical pedagogy, suggested that formal education could be viewed as an act of depositing knowledge, referring to it as the banking concept of education, with the student considered to be a recipient of knowledge created by others. Critical pedagogy is the application of critical theory to teaching, seeking to make the curriculum relevant to all student groups (Howard and Terry, 2011). However, Allen (2004) suggested that critical pedagogy was founded on a discourse that considered social class as the primary determinant of social and political life, consigning race to a subordinate factor.

This section puts race at the centre of the discourse and considers the various structural factors that are at play and impacting upon African-Caribbean students' experience of the English education process, such as streaming, curriculum design and curriculum delivery. The meaning of curriculum within this study refers not only to the subjects taught but also how they are delivered, and to wider structural issues which are multi-layered including the processes by which students are placed in different streams, limiting the level at which they can achieve (Tackey et al., 2011). For example, GCSE English, Mathematics and Science have foundation tiers in which the top achievable grade is C. In this example, future study and career opportunities that require B or better in any of these key core subjects such as English, mathematics and sciences will be unattainable to those who entered the foundation tier examinations.

With a focus on race, Ladson-Billings (1995) defined culturally relevant pedagogy as having three key components: to enable students to (1) experience academic success; (2) gain cultural competence; and (3) gain a critical political and social consciousness.

Ladson-Billings's first component of culturally relevant pedagogy was that students should experience academic success, meaning that they needed to be competent and successful learners, and arguing that it was important to get students to choose high academic success. She explained that this meant that it was crucial that students developed their academic abilities, including literacy, numeracy, technological skills, social skills and political skills. She argued that it was achieving basic skills in these areas that provided students with the means to experience academic success. Importantly, she noted that the goal of culturally relevant pedagogy was to enable students to choose academic excellence by valuing the

students' abilities and channelling them productively into supporting and achieving academic excellence.

Ladson-Billings's second component of culturally relevant pedagogy, cultural competence, required students to maintain a high degree of cultural integrity as well as academic excellence. She argued that to help the students to become culturally competent, elements from the students' own culture should be utilised during the teaching and within the learning environment. This required the teacher to become culturally aware and to be sensitive to students' differing cultural backgrounds (Whiting 2009).

Ladson-Billings's third component of culturally relevant pedagogy was that of critical consciousness. This aimed to enable marginalised students to develop the confidence to challenge any discriminatory practice they encounter. She suggested that students needed to be taught to analyse critically the environments and processes that promote inequities between ethnic groups, by developing students' political and social consciousness.

Further, to deliver culturally relevant pedagogy Coffey (2008) suggested that teachers could utilise students' experience, knowledge and background to help plan and deliver their lessons. Similarly, Petty (2004) argued that to provide an effective teaching environment it was essential that teachers were aware of a student's culture and that to truly understand students it was fundamental that a teacher was aware of and minimised the impact of the stereotypes they held, for example, that certain groups of students may be higher achievers than others. Petty also argued that it was vital that the curriculum included positive elements from students' ethnic backgrounds and cultures. This was supported by Milner

(2011) who explained why a culturally relevant curriculum was important for all students, as a culturally relevant education seeks to reflect the culture, values, customs and beliefs of all students.

Accordingly, Ladson-Billings's (1995) concepts of what constitutes good teaching highlighted the importance of providing a teaching environment that meets the needs of all students on several levels: a learning environment that is challenging academically, that nurtures students who are questioning of their world, that gives students some political awareness of their social world and that is supportive of students from differing backgrounds.

Several studies have defined and described the concept of the hidden curriculum which shapes students' identities and attitudes via hidden or implicit messages concerning themselves and others (Aveling, 2002; Freire, 1970; Jackson, 1968; Martin, 1998; Rios et al., 2010; and Weis & Fine, 2001). Rios et al. (2010) argued that specific information included in the curriculum informs us of its importance; however, the opposite occurs with consistent absence, informing us that it is of no importance or relevance. This action may have impacted significantly on individuals and groups that have been marginalised, and over time may have promoted negative self-schemas within those individuals and groups. Rios et al. argued that a person's belief about themselves creates a self-schema which could control how that person feels about themselves and their capabilities, as well as controlling the ways in which they may interpret their experiences, and the information they receive.

Additionally, Yosso (2002) emphasised the importance of gaining a broader understanding of the less visible elements of a curriculum such as process,

structure and discourse. Yosso discussed the decisions that are made about what knowledge is presented within a curriculum and how that knowledge is presented, both formally and informally, and to whom it can be presented. Furthermore, O'Neill and McMahon (2005) argued that a student-centred curriculum should take account of all students' experiences, backgrounds and interests; provide students with a high level of choice and encourage students to become active learners.

However, when considering the English education system, Graham and Robinson (2004) described the current school curriculum as remaining largely Eurocentric in that it failed to be pluralistic and its attempts to be inclusive, for example in history, may cause further alienation. They further highlighted how the delivery of the curriculum may impact negatively on students. For example, their study cited how a 15-year-old participant recalled his experience of how European history and culture were valued above others:

They kind of isolate us; the White pupils don't get treated as badly as the Black pupils... I think we should also learn a bit about our own culture as well ... at what point will they tell us that everyone came from Africa because they didn't in our history lesson. Not one thing was said in history about Black people even though it was supposed to be Black history month, all we got was English history and Hitler I remember sir (the teacher) only saying one thing about Negroes and that one thing was about Nigerians and he made it sound bad.

(Graham and Robinson, 2004; pp. 664-5)

Furthermore, Catarci (2014) suggested that the English Education Act 2006 moved education away from a multicultural and anti-racist emphasis towards a focus on

the academic achievement of ethnic minorities with an emphasis on national cohesion and citizenship education. He further suggested that intercultural education did not form part of official education policy within Europe. The concept of such a colour-blind approach to curriculum planning and teaching may have a significant impact on students' identity as argued by Banks (2001) who noted that students often must study curricula that exclude contributions from non-white ethnic groups. Jones (2016) also argued that a student's race was a significant aspect of their identity that should not be discounted. Similarly, Tikly et al. (2006) noted that for all students to be engaged and not marginalised it was important that they were able to own the curriculum and be able to identify themselves within it, for example, it was important that positive role models were portrayed.

In considering colour-blind approaches to curriculum planning, Jones (2016) also emphasised the negative impact that such curricula may have on students' self-identity and the development of students' self-worth. Jones highlighted the importance of students' identities being validated in the learning environment.

In relation to inadequately designed curricula, Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that critical pedagogy sought to be inclusive for all students and to challenge the present situation which excludes a range of student groups. Dlamini (2002) supported this assertion, writing that critical pedagogy considered education as essentially a political process, suggesting that in colleges students should be taught to think critically and their political awareness developed. Also, Jennings and Lynn (2005) suggested that both critical pedagogy and anti-racist education created an environment within which both teachers' and students' levels of consciousness could be increased and within which curricula and teaching practices may be questioned.

Stereotyping and academic achievement

Stereotyping is likely to contribute to the differences in academic achievement between students of different ethnic groups. Literature relating to stereotyping was explored, to discover the impact it may have on students' expectations of themselves, and the impact it may have on teachers' expectations of different student groups. Students' attitudes towards education and their academic aspirations may be key influences on their achievement. The idea of stereotyping and teachers' expectations are discussed later in this section as both concepts appeared to interact both in positive and negative ways. Stereotyping of groups may occur on several levels and may be compounded by the school system and other institutions such as the media which may maintain or reinforce stereotyping.

Petty (2004) defined stereotyping as attributing traits to an individual based on the group to which they are thought to belong. Although Petty highlighted the issue of stereotyping he did not fully explain how these stereotypes were created, or their origins, for example, the legacy of colonialism and the development of whiteness (Figure 4, p. 40). Importantly, Rogers and Freiberg (1994) asserted that it is not reality but perception which determines how one person treats another.

Petty (2004) argued that teachers commonly hold stereotypes for groups of students, for example, that females are weak at science, or that African-Caribbean students are not academically ambitious. Petty also suggested that negative stereotypes can cause the person holding them to lower their expectations for members of the group concerned, having a negative impact on students' performance, and becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Observing stereotyping at work, Law et al. (2012) described young Black men experiencing hostile and

highly negative racial stereotyping of their community and moreover noted their acute awareness of that stereotyping.

Stereotyping threat could be called the fear of failure, or the fear of being associated with a negative stereotype. Some studies claimed a link between what they call stereotyping threat and performance gaps. Steele (1997) defined stereotyping threat and its impact as being in a situation in which the subject believes that they could be judged based upon a stereotype, where that belief has a negative impact on their performance. For students concerned about their academic performance, the prospect of being negatively stereotyped or reduced to the stereotype may be destructive, diminishing their performance. Steele demonstrated this effect by measuring the intellectual performance of Black and White students under various experimental conditions. Looking for evidence of stereotyping threat, Clark et al. (2011) tested the intellectual performance of southern US college students, with findings similar to Steele's. The findings by Brown and Day (2006) also supported Steele. However, they acknowledged that other environmental factors such as educational and economic opportunities may also contribute to the performance gap between African-American and White students.

Steele (1997) further argued that one possible outcome of negative stereotyping is that an individual compensates by developing a protective disconnection from the situation that is creating the negative impact. This is supported by Major et al. (1998) who argued that disengagement from a domain may protect an individual's self-esteem from poor outcomes within that domain, for example the disengagement of self-esteem from feedback relating to one's intellectual

performance may be a highly appropriate coping strategy. Major et al. found that some African-American students exhibited this trait:

European American students had higher self-esteem after success than after failure whereas African American students had similar levels of self-esteem regardless of feedback.

(Major et al., 1998, p. 34)

Much of the literature argued that teachers' expectations have an influence on students' academic performance. Tyler and Boelter (2008) suggested that positive teacher expectations were associated with performance gains and that negative expectations resulted in academic difficulties, like a 'self-fulfilling prophecy.' Similarly, Goldenberg (1992) argued that if teachers had high expectations for students, they created a more effective learning environment which facilitated academic success. Tyler and Boelter (2008) highlighted factors that influenced teachers' expectations of students' abilities and potential, including students' past performance, ethnicity, students' gender, physical attractiveness and students' socio-economic status.

Positive student-teacher relationships appear to be significant, for example Woolley et al. (2010) suggested that there were many factors that influence students' learning but emphasised the importance of good student-teacher relationships and their positive impact on students' self-belief and behaviour. Indeed, Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor (2006) argued that the teacher-student relationship was the most influential factor in students' achievement. Murdock (1999) and Voelkl and Frone (2000) also noticed that students were sensitive to teachers' perception of their ability and that they achieved more highly when a

teacher believed that they could succeed. This was supported by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) who noted that if a child was expected to perform badly at school then that is typically what went on to happen. They further argued that culture, ethnicity or economic background was not likely to be the cause of student failure, but that it was more likely to be caused by the teachers' preconceptions of students from those backgrounds. They also stated that when a student who the teachers felt was not able did well the teachers' response to that success was less favourable.

Furthermore, Sanders and Rose-Adams (2014) suggested that teacher's expectations of students' academic ability were influenced by discriminatory practices. Highlighting the importance of teachers having high academic expectations for all their students, Hargrove and Seay (2011) suggested that teachers' perceptions of students' ability were very important, as several studies had revealed that some teachers identify students from low-income and minority backgrounds as less intelligent than other students. Moreover, this had a negative impact on the teacher-student relationship.

Several writers have observed the harsher treatment of Black male students in schools. Wright et al. (1998) noted that Black male students experienced harsher schooling conditions than others, in turn perceiving that teachers may be intimidated by them. This was demonstrated for example by teachers not requesting homework due, teachers sending Black male students to the head teacher for discipline, or teachers singling out Black male students for punishment more often than others. Connolly (1995) also observed less tolerance of disruptive behaviour by Black males, who were perceived as more troublesome. Likewise, Monroe (2005) suggested that there was a discipline gap, in that Black males were

more likely to be disciplined more than their White counterparts. In addition, Wallace et al. (2008) argued that African-Caribbean students of both genders experienced a more oppressive form of schooling than their White peers. Monroe (2005) highlighted the tendency by some teachers and school management to be less tolerant of behaviour that was disruptive, for example talking in class. Importantly, Tikly et al. (2006) observed that there was little fostering of the student's self-identity, while James (2012) further noted a failure to create an atmosphere of belonging and ownership of the education process.

Some teachers were seen to approach classroom management with a strong focus on controlling students' behaviour. For example, Teske (2011) discussed zero tolerance policies in schools, which focussed specifically on punishment as a tool to modify behaviour, without seeking to understand the reason(s) behind this disruptive behaviour. This was seen to have a negative impact on the students. Teske argued that zero tolerance policies failed to take account of adolescent brain development research, which suggested that the adolescent brain is yet not fully developed. The consequence of this was that students might not deal with difficult situations at a rational level, but instead at an emotional one. He argued that this emotional response was a normal stage of development. Hence zero tolerance policies could create a hostile learning environment, where experiential learning is not encouraged or supported and where mistakes are not viewed as developmental or due to immaturity. Kolb (1984) discussed experiential learning as a method to create a more meaningful learning environment and to provide an educational experience that more actively engages the student.

Development of a positive racial group identity was seen to be important for Black male students, for example Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2011) found that it was

important for positive academic outcomes that Black boys developed a positive racial group identity. In considering male success Rogers et al. (2015) argued that in a male-dominated culture success was associated with the male gender, but not with Black males. Furthermore, Earl Davis (2006), Ferguson (2001) and Nasir (2011) argued that negative stereotypes of young Black men, for example as more troublesome and as underachievers, had an impact on how they perceived themselves when developing their self-identity. Also, Osterman (2000) highlighted the importance of a feeling of belonging within the school community, which had a positive impact on a student's attitude towards school and learning. A positive attitude was important for personal development and academic success. Likewise, Rogers et al. (2015) emphasised the importance of social identities, their influence on how students felt about themselves, and noted that mid-adolescence is a critical time for the exploration and development of social identity. This concept was further developed by Rogers and Way (2016), who suggested that young people's identities were linked to other people's social expectations and stereotypes of them, with Erikson (1968) and Suárez-Orozco (2004) suggesting that these images can become social mirrors, other people's viewpoints that reflect society's image of what and who young people should be.

In summary, the potential link between teachers' views and their stereotyping of the academic ability of individuals or groups of students remains critical, and it is possible for this to have a profound impact on students' belief in their own ability to achieve academically. Importantly, predicted grades for level 3 examinations form part of the university application process, affecting the type of universities applied to by students and influencing the universities' selection processes. As the literature suggests, negative stereotypes held by teachers, leading to lower

predicted grades, may affect the type of university that a student goes on to attend. Teachers and educational establishments may perceive African-Caribbean male students as needing to be overly controlled (Wallace et al. 2008) or be less able academically. Such factors may impact on these students, and in turn inform their own academic self-identities. These factors may inhibit them seeing themselves as successful academic students with the ability to achieve the top grades. The argument made by James (2012) of the importance of a feeling of belonging in the educational environment was significant. Sampson and Garrison-Wade (2011) argued that the need to develop a positive self-identity appeared to be essential in a young person's emotional and psychological development in relation to their self-identity and racial group identity.

Research questions

The majority of African-Caribbean students appear to experience underachievement, for example, Figure 30, p.274 (Source: HEIDI data set, 2014) shows that too few of these students gain admission into the elite "Russell group" of universities. Critical race theory was an insightful and useful tool in developing and refining the research questions for the study. The theory pointed to the need to investigate the extent of racism and the impact of whiteness or White privilege within the English education system. Everyday racist behaviour such as micro-aggressions and micro-invalidations may have a significant role in student underachievement (DeAngelis, 2009). Stereotyping, linked to the social construct of race, both by teachers, the students themselves and their peers, may limit students' potential achievement (Petty, 2004). Student attitude and aspirations and how everyday racism could influence these were also important to explore

(Law et al., 2012). The intersectionality of race and socio-economic status and race and gender were clear in the data used as part of the rationale for this thesis (DfE, 2015a; DfE, 2015b; DfE, 2016; Strand, 2014).

The research process adopted a critical race theory informed approach that uniquely aimed to record the collective voice of this group of students. It is less common for studies such as this to aim to capture the group voice; more often, individual voices are recorded and analysed. In this study it was hoped that the collective voice of this group, following discussion, could yield a wider range of responses (Cohen et al., 2011, p.432). It might seem that there is a contradiction between seeking the collective voice whilst giving weight to individual voices. However, the data capture method employed guarded against the risk of excluding dissenting voices.

The literature suggested that there was no link between being Black and having low educational aspirations, but also that African-Caribbean students are likely to experience negative stereotyping regarding their academic ability and may internalise low expectations as a result. Hence the first research question was:

What are the aspirations of students age 16-18, especially in relation to learning, progression and future profession?

This question aims to challenge the dominant white ideology. Law et al. (2012) argued that white ideology stereotypes African-Caribbean students as having low academic aspirations, with family values that support those low aspirations.

The literature described several influences that may have an impact on students' achievement. Hence the second research question was:

What factors contribute to their achievement or underachievement at this stage of their education?

Again, this question seeks to challenge the dominant white ideology, such as blaming the continuing underachievement of Black students on the students themselves (Ladson-Billings, 2007), and the assertion that their families do not value education (Law et al., 2012). Additionally, this question seeks to highlight instances of social injustice where for example teachers' negative attitudes may have an impact on students' performance.

The literature presented aspects of education policy and practice that may contribute to the underachievement of African-Caribbean students. Therefore, the third research question sought to discover the most significant of these factors that may be at play:

What are the lessons for policy and practice in the further education and skills sector relating to underachievement?

This question was inspired by the commitment of critical race theory to social justice and may provide insight into concealed racism embedded in educational practice. Information gathered about current education policy and practice may provide information about the contemporary context of these students' educational experience.

Summary

This chapter presented critical race theory as a theoretical framework to investigate the underachievement of African-Caribbean students by understanding

and challenging the accepted social order. Racial micro-aggressions are one process of oppression that may be found in education. Other processes of domination may include the impact of Whiteness and colour-blind education policies. An overwhelming element that linked many areas within the literature was that of covert power that acted to maintain the current situation, preserving White positions of power or advantage and resisting change. Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital help to illustrate how dominant groups may oppress minorities.

This chapter reviewed English education policy relating to ethnic minorities over the last 40 years, highlighting the government's commitment to UNCRC Article 29. Achievement gap theories cited both intrinsic and structural factors as contributing to this underachievement. For Black students, their race appeared to have a greater impact on their achievement than their socio-economic status. The literature refuted many intrinsic factor theories; however, students' attitude and aspirations were seen to be a key influence on achievement. The literature recommended culturally relevant pedagogy which acknowledges the importance of race and places the student at the centre of teaching and learning. The literature also suggested that racial stereotyping by teachers is likely to have a significant impact on students' performance.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter starts with a consideration of epistemology including a comparison of different research paradigms, then outlines critical race methodology and the ethical issues relating to the study. The selection of a case study approach is explained, and data collection and analysis methods are discussed. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the methodology including researcher objectivity.

Epistemology

This thesis sought to gather new data to provide insights into the key issues identified in the research questions outlined in chapter one. In searching for new insights, it is important to consider epistemological questions. Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that investigates the nature of knowledge including the validity of different types of knowledge and the various means by which it is acquired (Audi, 2003).

This research employs an interpretive research paradigm (Hammersley, 2007) seeking to record and understand the lived reality of the student group to be studied, which is fundamentally subjective. Interpretivists suggest that to understand why people do what they do, or why particular institutions exist and operate in specific ways, we must aim to understand how people interpret and make sense of their world, paying attention to the distinctive nature of their beliefs, modes of thinking and ways of behaving (Hammersley, 2007). The aspects of the interpretive paradigm that make it appropriate for this study are that it

employs an exploratory approach, and that its aim is to discover the rationale behind what people do and say.

Positivism was considered as an approach for this study; however, this was not appropriate for several reasons. Such approaches often use quantitative methods and deal with structured numerical data. However, the aim of this thesis was to collect written responses directly from the participants in the study (Hammersley et al., 2003). A positivist approach conducts research from a scientific viewpoint, assuming situations are stable and uniform. In contrast, this research deals with situations as experienced by the group to be studied (Hammersley et al., 2001).

Quantitative data such as numerical measurements and statistics proved useful in providing the rationale for this thesis; however, qualitative research methods were needed for the collection of new insights. Non-numerical or qualitative data was required to explore the lived experience of the students and teachers in the research. Importantly, recording the collective voice of the participants would be crucial to gain insights into the key issues relating to African-Caribbean students' aspirations, the factors that influence their academic achievement, and possible improvements to education policy and practice.

In addition, contextual quantitative statistical data was obtained from the Department for Education (DfE) and from the Higher Education Information Database for Institutions (HEIDI) to establish the rationale and direction for this study (Hammersley 2007). Importantly, this secondary statistical information considered students' achievement over several years, analysed by pupil characteristics, including gender, race and social class. The use of this quantitative

data provided a numerical and objective overview of achievement, as quantified by the DfE, and provided the specific focus for this thesis.

While quantitative data collected could be open-ended and not limited by the researcher's prior assumptions, Hammersley (2007) noted that the aim of quantitative researchers was to measure social phenomena and that the qualitative researcher is more exploratory in nature, with a less structured approach. During the process of qualitative research, key issues are clarified further and developed. Importantly, the combination of both quantitative and qualitative data collection can enable triangulation and validation of both forms of data (Hammersley et al., 2003; Hammersley, 2007). Three components contribute to ensuring the validity of qualitative research: unobtrusive measures, validation, and triangulation (Hammersley et al., 2003). Unobtrusive measures ensure that the data collected reflects the scene studied. It was important that the researcher avoided influencing the outcomes and remained as unobtrusive as possible. The use of the data collection method outlined later in this chapter, enabled the researcher to remain largely unobtrusive.

Critical race methodology

Critical race methodology provides a framework, within which to conduct and present research based upon the experience and knowledge of marginalised groups (Sue and Constantine, 2007). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) defined this methodology as a research approach that places race and racism at the centre of the data gathering process. Critical race methodology in education seeks to challenge the traditional theories that have been used to explain the experiences of marginalised groups (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002; Hylton, 2012).

To understand the educational experiences of African-Caribbean students, this research used aspects of critical race methodology. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) listed five elements of critical race methodology: the intersectionality of race with other forms of demographic classification; challenging the dominant white ideology; a commitment to social justice; an acknowledgement of the significance of the experiential knowledge of marginalised groups; and a transdisciplinary perspective that views racism in both a historical and a contemporary context. These aspects are discussed in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

The first element of critical race methodology considers the intersectionality of race with other forms of demographic classification, for example, social class or gender, and starts from the premise that racism is tenacious and endemic (see also literature review p. 47). The educational achievement data presented earlier as part of the rationale for the study clearly demonstrated this intersectionality. For example, Figure 18, Figure 19 and Figure 20 (Appendix A, p. 261) break down the achievements of students age 11-16 by race and socio-economic status (SES) (Strand, 2014). They show that the achievement gap between SES top quintile African-Caribbean students and White British students was much greater than the gap between students in the SES bottom quintile.

The second element of critical race methodology is to challenge the dominant white ideology. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) argued that the use of critical race methodology in education research challenges White privilege and rejects the notion of the impartial researcher. In this study the literature review highlighted the pervasiveness and impact of whiteness in education (Reay and Mirza, 1997).

The third element of critical race methodology is that of a commitment to social justice, which advocates the eradication of racism, sexism and poverty, and the empowerment of subordinate minority groups. Hence, the issue of the continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students, and the need for, and the possibility of change are evident as a clear rationale for this study.

The fourth element of critical race methodology is to acknowledge the significance of experiential knowledge, meaning giving legitimacy to the experiences of marginalised groups. Critical race scholars often produce counter-stories based upon the data they collect and their own personal experiences to more effectively communicate their findings (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

The fifth element of critical race methodology is to use a transdisciplinary perspective which seeks to analyse race and racism in education by placing them in both a historical and a contemporary context. The literature review (p. 38) highlighted the historical legacy of colonialism and slavery and its continuing impact on the educational experiences of African-Caribbean students (Levine-Rasky, 2013).

In this thesis intersectionality is considered in the analysis of the data captured. Additionally, this study looked for data that challenged the dominant white ideology in current English educational practice and looked for evidence of social injustice. Students were invited to record their ideas and perspectives in their own words. Note that the focus group method to be employed in this study, based upon Metaplan techniques (p. 95), was designed to capture the collective voice of the participants, but may not provide data of sufficient depth or richness to

produce critical race theory informed counter-stories. However, through its group voting process Metaplan allows some data interpretation by the participants.

Ethical considerations

Ethics is the branch of philosophy that deals with values and moral principles related to human behaviour (Holzemer and Klainbery, 2014). The proposed methodology for data gathering required the involvement of human subjects, therefore requiring review and approval by the University's ethics committee. The process of gaining ethical approval for the proposed research was valuable in highlighting a range of important issues to consider. These issues included the clarity of the explanation of the proposed research methods, the importance of ensuring informed consent from the participants and ways to minimise the risk of harm to participants. These points were addressed as discussed below.

Four key ethical issues were identified for the study: a requirement for informed consent before participating in the research; the risk to the participants that might be associated with the research due to the type of issues under investigation; protection of disclosure of the source of participants' comments to maintain confidentiality; and data protection and anonymization (HREC, 2014). It was important to ensure that these ethical issues were addressed effectively before and during the initial and main studies.

It was also important to ensure that fully informed consent was obtained from students before their involvement in the study (Murphy and Dingwall, 2007). Voluntary informed consent ensures that participants receive information and assurance before agreeing to be involved in research. This information includes what the research is about, why it is being conducted, what it involves for

participants, an explanation of voluntary participation, and reinforcement of the option of withdrawal at any time (Burgess, 1989). As explained under Participant recruitment (p. 109) contact was made with selected senior college staff members regarding the nature and purpose of the research, and they were sent an information leaflet for them to share and discuss with prospective student participants. With no direct access to the potential participants, students in the target groups were identified by these contacts and given information regarding the research. On arrival at the focus group sessions, student participants were provided with the information leaflet describing the purpose of the study, requesting their voluntary consent and describing their role in taking part. Student participants had the opportunity to ask questions and to seek clarification as to the purpose of the research and their role and the contributions required. Before the commencement of the focus group activity participants were reminded that if at any time, they were not happy to continue, they were free to withdraw. Bourke & Loveridge (2014) suggested that informed dissent may be voiced at any stage of the research process. They noted that for meaningful participation in a research project, student buy in is a powerful tool, meaning that the students actively participate in the study. To ensure that students were over the age of 16, before the commencement of the focus group activity, each participant completed a pre-focus group student questionnaire which provided information on their age. All were over the age of 16, and so did not require parental consent to take part in the research.

It was necessary to protect student participants from harm, both physical and psychological (HREC, 2014). To provide this protection, careful consideration was given to the ethnic composition of student groups, and the decision was taken not

to include White students in the sample, as the focus of the research was African-Caribbean students. In addition, this action reduced the risk of any potentially sensitive subject matter under discussion creating a hostile research environment.

It was possible that during the focus group, participants may recall incidents which caused them distress and that describing these events may cause additional distress. This issue did not occur at any point during the sessions; however, participants were free to withdraw at any point during the sessions if they found any part of the research process disturbing. Teachers were not present in the sessions but were available to support students should the need arise during the sessions. At the end of the sessions some debriefing time was allocated for further discussion of such issues with the researcher on a one-to-one basis if requested (HREC, 2014). No participants requested debriefing after any of the sessions.

To address the issues of confidentiality and data protection all information from participant students and teachers was anonymised. The research process was designed to ensure that no participant could be identified from the data or from the use of this data in conjunction with other information in the researcher's possession, or likely to come into the researcher's possession. Anonymisation was achieved by not recording participants' personal details such as names, address or date of birth. The written responses to questions from participants during the research process included no personal information. Written contributions, once captured, were not linked to the student participant who wrote them. Additionally, the thesis does not identify the education institutions that took part in the research.

In many studies researchers use pseudonyms to identify their research participants. However, Allen and Wiles (2016) argued that pseudonyms can have unintended psychological meanings in the context of a research project, for example by suggesting participant gender or ethnicity. Additionally, they argued that pseudonyms can create tensions between the need for confidentiality and the need for context. I was concerned that identifying the source of every contribution could make it easier to identify participants by their set of contributions, for example by their institution or teachers. Hence, I planned to ensure that every contribution was anonymised. The downside of this approach is that it prevents the use of pseudonyms for the participants, and it should be noted that this approach may conflict with producing counter-stories within a critical race theory informed approach. Furthermore, without the use of pseudonyms the impact and depth of the data may be reduced. However, the aim of this study was to record the collective voice of the target group, which could be achieved without the use of pseudonyms.

My employer was informed of my intention to undertake this research to ensure that there was no conflict of interest in the use of existing publicly available data.

Research design

A case study of African-Caribbean students aged 16-18 in further education was chosen as the research style for this thesis, to explore the influences on these students' educational achievement. The aim was to encourage students to take an active part in describing and explaining their experiences of the English education system. As outlined in Cohen et al. (2011), case studies have both advantages and limitations. A case study can provide a unique example of members of a

marginalised group in a real situation, can be undertaken by a single researcher, can provide results that are accessible to a wide audience and can capture data that may include unique insights. However, the insights gained may be difficult to generalise, may be hard to cross check and are vulnerable to researcher bias (Nisbet and Watt, 1984). Although often used in conjunction with critical race methodology, an ethnographic approach was not considered appropriate in this case as the research was not longitudinal in nature and there would be no opportunity to respond to emerging features during the study (Cohen et al., 2011). However, both ethnography and case studies have some commonalities including subjectivity, portrayal of the issues in the subject's terms, taking multiple perspectives, gathering the perceptions of participants and adopting an interpretive approach (Cohen et al., 2011).

Data collection methods

Several data collection methods were assessed for their compatibility with critical race theory, including whether they would enable the active involvement of participants in this case study, allowing them to express their thoughts and record their experiences.

The use of direct observation as described by Robson (2002) was considered as a technique to gather data from students; however, it would not have been possible to record the thoughts of the participants through observation. For a critical race theory informed analysis, it was important to collect the views of the students rather than just to observe their behaviour. Written questionnaires for the students would have been economical with time but would have been unlikely to generate the depth and clarity of data required (Robson, 2002). To gather data

from the teachers, postal questionnaires were considered, a method with both advantages and limitations. For this approach all participants are asked the same questions, the analysis may be relatively straightforward, and the technique may be time efficient. However, response rates may be low, the sample may be biased and there is the risk that the participants may have different interpretations of the same question as there would be no opportunity for the participants to request clarification (Hammersley et al., 2001). Group interviewing of students has both advantages and limitations. One benefit of this method at the start of a research process is that it may provide a basis from which to write and test the research questions. Interviewing students in groups can save time and can create an environment where the participants trigger additional responses from others in the group, providing additional information. However, limitations of group interviewing include the difficulty of managing group interactions, difficulties in recording and transcribing information, and particularly in identifying who said what. Another disadvantage of group interviews is that participants may not reveal their true thoughts and feelings (Robson, 2002). Face to face interviewing has both advantages and limitations. A benefit of this method is that it may provide more information due to its interactive nature, enabling the interviewer to engage actively with the participants, making it possible to probe further into their answers (Hammersley et al., 2001). However, there are a number of possible limitations; for example, it may be difficult to ascertain participants' true beliefs, as they may give the responses that they think the interviewer wants to hear or that they feel are appropriate (Robson, 2002).

A semi-structured questionnaire was selected to gather data from the teachers in the main study. Cohen et al. (2011) suggested that a semi-structured

questionnaire can set the agenda but does not presuppose the nature of the response. Using such a questionnaire would make it possible to gather data efficiently from several teachers at once and would enable the teachers to give in-depth responses.

This study used an innovative, critical race theory informed approach that aimed to record the collective voice of African-Caribbean students which is not often recorded. To support this, a focus group technique based upon Metaplan (Metaplan, 2009) was developed. This technique appeared to be particularly efficient and effective at capturing the collective voice of focus group participants, as the participants make their contributions in writing on an equal basis, ensuring inclusivity, and all could participate in preliminary data analysis.

Habershon (1993) noted that Metaplan is the trade name of a German management consultancy founded in 1972 who developed the Metaplan technique and who has trained many Metaplan facilitators. Habershon highlighted that Metaplan had become extremely popular in Germany and had trained thousands of facilitators, expanding into France and into the UK. Additionally, he described the ingredients and process of a Metaplan “event” and noted that less formal Metaplan-inspired variations have developed.

It should be acknowledged that there is little literature that discusses the use of Metaplan within qualitative education research and I hope to offer new insights into how it can best be used in this kind of research. For example, an Open University library search for the years 1988-2018 revealed just 28 articles mentioning the Metaplan technique, none of which were directly related to Education. The top topics were business (5 articles) and Engineering (5 articles).

It appears that Metaplan, originally a business tool, was subsequently used in a small number of engineering and health studies. Hence, it is likely that this is the first study of further education in England to employ Metaplan.

Lawlor et al. (1999) recommended Metaplan as an efficient and effective method for capturing, recording and analysing data that can provide written results from the participants not influenced by the researcher's own perceptions. The health study described by Lawlor et al. in which they employed Metaplan was particularly relevant to this thesis because the participants were in the same age range of 17-18 years. Rueter and Simpson (2016) argued that the Metaplan technique is a useful tool for creating more effective and efficient focus group discussions and presented a study of education practice that employed a Metaplan focus group with 19 participants.

Frijns (2008) outlined some possible risks of using Metaplan, common to many "brainstorming" techniques, such as groups that are too small or too large, too homogeneous, prone to "groupthink", with participants that dominate the session, or with inexperienced facilitators.

As group size was a possible risk, focus groups of 6-12 participants were organised, as recommended by Morgan (1997) and Longhurst (2003). To avoid "groupthink", groups were constructed from a mix of genders and minority ethnic backgrounds. Metaplan techniques are less vulnerable to dominant participants than some other focus group techniques since each participant makes their written contributions on an equal basis. These contributions are then combined to form the collective voice. To minimise the impact of my lack of experience with Metaplan, a pilot study allowed me to gain familiarity with the proposed technique.

Metaplan appeared to overcome some of the limitations of other data gathering methods such as questionnaires, group interviewing and one-to-one interviewing, as discussed above on pages 95-96, whilst ensuring that all participants had equal opportunity to contribute to the collective voice. A version of Metaplan was developed based upon the technique described in Metaplan (2009). One flip chart page for each focus group question was placed around the room. The participants discussed each question in turn, and after discussing the meaning of the question, each participant responded by writing one or more answers on Post-it notes which they attached to the question's flip chart page. For some questions, the participants were asked to group their responses to each question according to shared characteristics and after discussion, to vote for the grouping or answer that was most significant to them.

Using Metaplan techniques with students in the focus groups, it was possible to elaborate on the questions posed, interact with the participants if clarification was needed, and provide prompts to elicit more in-depth responses (Hammersley et al., 2001; Robson, 2002). The use of this focus group approach provided the opportunity to capture a range of views from the participants in a single session and provided more in-depth information than would have been obtained in one-to-one interviews. This focus group technique provided a rich source of data, by enabling participants to interact and bounce ideas off each other, challenging and building on each other's ideas, with issues and perspectives that were important to participants emerging during the discussions. Voting on the responses considered most important by group members often highlighted their motives and values. Although not proposed in this study, participants' motives could have been

investigated further using semi-structured interviews within an interpretive approach.

The students' written responses to the questions together with the grouping and ranking formed the raw data for analysis. It was possible to explore the degree of consensus on a given topic and provided access to group attitudes and perceptions. This consensus was enabled through the categorising of and voting for responses by participants.

An essential principle of the group work was that each participant was able to record their personal thoughts or beliefs. This aspect was protected during the process as participants were encouraged to discuss the questions under review as a group, but not to discuss their responses. Hence, the relationship between consensus, group decision making, and expression of personal opinions would be balanced in this instance. Participants were able to record their detailed thoughts, with the outcome of each group vote indicating the group consensus registered on each flip chart.

Metaplan is not just about group consensus but also about reflection as a group and the expression of opinions to form a collective voice. Collecting written responses can overcome the common focus group challenges of capturing multiple voices and concurrent discussions. Hence, gathering information using Metaplan can be less problematic than in traditional focus groups, as participants can record their personal response to each question. Participants were encouraged to use whole sentences to capture their views as opposed to single words, giving additional meaning and clarity to the information gathered.

A limitation of this variant of Metaplan is that the responses cannot be attributed to particular participants, since these responses are anonymously recorded by the participants on identical post-it notes. This is a practical limitation that prevents the assignment of pseudonyms to the study participants, in addition to the previously stated ethical considerations relating to the use of pseudonyms (Ethical considerations, p.94). Additionally, in such a Metaplan focus group including a mix of minority ethnicities, it is not possible to break down the findings by ethnicity.

Aiming to capture a collective voice using Metaplan has the potential to reduce the diversity of opinions on a topic to a single majority viewpoint. However, Metaplan records divergent opinions in addition to the majority viewpoint, as each participant records their personal thoughts and ideas before voting take place.

Data analysis

Seeking to understand the issues facing African-Caribbean students in further education, this study would combine evidence from the literature, government data, focus groups, questionnaire responses and personal experience to form the inputs into its data analysis process. This process would include elements from constructivist grounded theory which, as argued by Gynnild (2014) has the significant advantage that it is solution-oriented rather than problem-focused. Charmaz (2014) noted that grounded theory methods provide flexible but systematic guidelines for qualitative data collection and analysis. For the analysis of the data both grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008) and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) were considered. However, Charmaz drew a distinction between objectivist grounded theory which she argued was derived

from positivism, and constructivist grounded theory which she classified as part of the interpretive paradigm.

Charmaz (2014, p. 236) compared and contrasted objectivist and constructivist grounded theory as follows: Objectivist grounded theory assumes an external reality that can be discovered through the gathering of data by a neutral, passive observer, from which conceptualisations can emerge. However, unlike objectivist grounded theory, constructivist grounded theory works on the assumption that there are multiple realities, with mutual construction of data through interaction with the research participants, and an acknowledgment that the researcher is imperfect, with actions, values and priorities that have an impact on the data and its analysis.

Objectivist grounded theory has implications for data analysis that are incompatible with critical race methodology, for example that priority should be given to the researcher's own analytical categories and voice (Charmaz, 2014). Constructivist grounded theory makes participants' views and voices integral to the data analysis, and acknowledges the subjectivity of the researcher (Charmaz, 2014), attributes that are compatible with critical race methodology.

In this study, the focus group technique supported the use of constructivist grounded theory as it enabled the active involvement of students, allowing previously missing voices to contribute to the generation of new insights.

Reflections on the methodology

A variety of factors impacted on the research, both during the literature review and the field work. The issues of researcher objectivity/subjectivity and bias were

considered, to ensure that as far as possible these did not influence the results or analysis. However, qualitative research is an interpretivist activity that researchers undertake in a subjective manner, making the concept of researcher objectivity problematic, so it is important to acknowledge and make transparent the researcher's subjectivity, a process often referred to as 'reflexivity':

The term reflexivity is also used in a methodological sense to refer to the process of critical self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences, and so forth ... the inquirer is part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand. Hence, reflexivity can be a means for critically inspecting the entire research process.

(Schwandt, 2007, p. 261)

The researcher's position as an insider or outsider regarding gender, race and professional role was considered, as recommended by Dwyer and Buckle (2009) and Agyeman (2008). Furthermore, Brayboy and Deyhle (2000) argued that the participants in a study may question the motives of the researcher and wonder what the benefits are of taking part in the research. Merriam et al. (2001) suggested that insider and outsider status can be complex. My ethnicity would enable me to identify with the student group and provide some understanding and insight into our shared cultural background. This may enable trust to develop quickly, creating and allowing for an open discussion in which student participants may be more relaxed (Brayboy and Deyhle, 2000). Understanding of and empathy with participants is important:

Such a disposition would appear to be necessary if we are to penetrate 'fronts', achieve access to people's self and share in their innermost

confidences.

(Hammersley, 2007, p. 58)

As a Black professional the student participants may regard me as a role model. Nevertheless, it will be important to acknowledge the power relationships between the researcher and research participants. Sanjek (1993) introduced the concept of scientific colonialism in which the researcher assumes unlimited rights of access to data of any kind, just as a colonial power felt it had the right to any product of commercial value. In this model the researcher holds all the power, the participants are colonised and potentially oppressed. As Merriam et al. (2001) argued, researchers should be aware of these power relationships and negotiate them during the research process.

Therefore, it was important to ensure that my assumptions did not overshadow the data collection as Hammersley (2007) suggests is possible. For this research, the use of Metaplan techniques may help to make sure that my assumptions do not influence the responses given by student participants. This method of data collection should balance out the power relationship between the researcher and the participants, as they can record their responses independently with little influence from the researcher. The Metaplan approach is discussed further in Chapter 4 (Methods).

Summary

This chapter on methodology started with a rationale for the collection of qualitative data and for the use of an interpretive paradigm supporting a critical race theory informed methodology. Ethical considerations were discussed,

followed by the advantages and limitations of the proposed case study approach, and then the rationale was presented for using Metaplan techniques and questionnaires to collect data, and for the application of constructivist grounded theory. The chapter concludes by discussing the issues of researcher subjectivity and bias.

Chapter 4: Methods

Introduction

The objective of the research was to conduct a case study of a selection of 16- to 18-year-old African-Caribbean students in further education and a selection of their teachers. To test the proposed research, design an initial study was conducted at a single school with six student participants and three teacher participants. Its contributions to the main study are discussed in the first part of this chapter.

Two target schools for the main study were identified using DfE data (DfE, 2013). School A provided ten student participants and three teacher participants. School B provided nine student participants and three teacher participants. A further education college C was contacted through a colleague, which provided four additional student participants. Students participated in Metaplan style focus groups, and teachers answered questionnaires with the researcher present. This process took one afternoon at each of the three establishments. Student profiles were recorded on questionnaires completed by each student at the start of the session.

The output from these visits was in the form of the completed student profile questionnaires (transcribed in Appendix E, p. 288), a flip chart page for each focus group question (examples in Appendix F, p. 292, transcribed in Appendix G, p. 294), and the completed teacher questionnaires (transcribed in Appendix H, p. 311). For the students' and teachers' responses, colour coding was used to

highlight key words and concepts, and common elements from these answers were grouped into categories or themes.

Initial study

An initial study was undertaken to test the proposed research design, which was a case study of a selection of 16- to 18-year olds with a focus on African-Caribbean students in further education. Finding an establishment with sufficient students proved a challenge. Several types of organisation were approached including sixth form colleges, church groups and youth organisations, and as a result, a Business and Enterprise Academy School for students aged 11-19 that could provide a group of six suitable students was found. Hence, for the main study it appeared that a more systematic approach was needed to identify organisations with significant numbers of African-Caribbean students aged 16-18.

Parental consent for students' participation in the study was found not to be required provided all the students were 16 or over. In this initial study, after receiving a presentation of its purpose and what their involvement would be, students were asked for their verbal consent to participate. It was found that most of the students in this initial study were studying for vocational qualifications. Hence, to obtain a more diverse range of student, for the main study it was decided to select groups with a greater proportion of students studying academic courses. Additionally, participants in the main study would be asked to complete a questionnaire to record basic information about themselves, including their age, so that it could be verified that they were all 16 or over.

The students in the initial study participated in a focus group session aiming to capture their thoughts on a series of questions, given in Appendix D (p. 284). At

the end of the session, the participants were asked to give feedback on the focus group questions, and to indicate which questions required clarification. Following analysis of the participants' answers to questions, reflection on the researcher's experiences during the initial study, and taking the participants' feedback into consideration, the focus group questions were revised for use in the main study. Some questions required elaboration to ensure that they generated data that would shed light on the research questions. Others were removed or split into two to enhance clarity for the participants. More complex questions were found to need a group discussion to clarify their meaning. The changes and their justification are listed in Table 5 in Appendix D (p. 285). Additionally, it was noted that because of the students being in their first year of further education, some responses gathered in the focus group lacked depth. Therefore, it was decided that student participants for the main study should be in their second year of study where possible.

For the initial study, a questionnaire was prepared for the teacher participants. Copies of this questionnaire were given to the sixth form manager on the day of the focus group session. Several weeks later, the manager returned completed questionnaires from three teachers by post. However, the responses from these teachers lacked sufficient depth to gain fruitful insight into the research questions for the study. The use of a postal questionnaire for this initial study meant that it was not possible to probe further to clarify and expand upon the teachers' responses. Hence, to obtain more in-depth answers in a timely manner, for the main study it was decided to plan sessions in which the researcher would be present to support and motivate the teacher participants in completing the questionnaire. Additionally, after considering the teachers' responses to the initial

study questionnaire, which included feedback on some of the questions' wording, the questions were updated to reduce repetitiveness and to improve their clarity, as can be seen in Table 6 (Appendix D, p. 287).

This initial study provided the opportunity to discover and address issues with the proposed research approach, including the difficulty of gaining access to potential participants. It highlighted the shortcomings of postal questionnaires as a method of data collection for the research and provided the opportunity to review the content of the questions for the focus groups and questionnaires.

Participant recruitment for the main study

Given the constraints encountered in gaining access to participants for the initial study, and the low numbers of students from the target group in post-16 education, for the main study a more systematic recruitment approach was adopted. Using the information published in the January 2013 school census (DfE, 2013), which included students' race, it was possible to identify the sixth-forms in England with the greatest number of students from the target group. The top 16 sixth forms from this list were contacted, and four of them responded. Two were unable to take part in the research due to other commitments; however, the remaining two were very positive. After an initial telephone conversation to discuss the purpose and requirements of the research with the heads of each sixth form, they were both sent a letter which outlined the selection criteria for the student and teacher research participants. These letters included information leaflets that they were encouraged to share with potential participants to help them to recruit the students and teachers required (Appendix C: Handouts for participants, p. 277). The invitation to participate was extended to all Black

students who defined themselves as such, with a focus on students of African-Caribbean heritage.

As the study was seeking to explore the educational experiences of African-Caribbean students, and with due regard to ethical considerations it was important to ensure that students were protected from both physical or psychological harm due to the nature of the subject matter under review. Hence White students were not invited to participate in the focus groups because this may have stifled open and honest discussion of race related issues experienced by the Black students. Smithson (2000) suggested that in a focus group, an individual belonging to a minority ethnic group may not raise an issue relating to race or ethnicity if not in the majority. The study included both genders to obtain a richer picture. Figure 21 (p. 264) as well as much of the literature had indicated that the achievement gaps observed are more strongly influenced by race than by gender (Vincent et al. 2012a; Gillborn et al. 2012; Strand 2011). Figure 21 (Appendix A, p. 264) demonstrated that both female and male African-Caribbean students were at the bottom of the DfE GCSE and equivalent attainment tables. It also showed a marked gender difference in academic achievement between female and male African-Caribbean students with males as the lowest achievers. This difference in achievement continues to persist as noted by Gillborn et al. (2012), Rollock (2007) and Wright et al. (1998).

Results from the initial study had indicated that students in their second year of study were able to give more in-depth, reflective responses to the questions. Hence, for this main study, only second-year students were invited. The teachers were selected by their organisation on the basis that they taught one or more of the student participants. This thesis uses the letters A, B and C to identify the

participating organisations whilst preserving their anonymity. Students were selected by the heads of each sixth form and were all over the age of 16 so that parental consent would not be required for them to participate.

One limitation of this study was that I had no means to select participants directly; this meant that it was necessary to access them through a third party such as a head of an organisation or department. Consequently, it was possible that the organisations involved in the research may have had ulterior motives for selecting the students and teachers that participated in the research, for example, they may have chosen students who were achieving well academically and hence may be less critical of their learning experience. Such biases may have had an impact on the outcome of the study. However, responses were quite consistent between the three focus groups.

The teachers who took part in the research taught one or more of the student participants directly and were informed of the aims of the research. The student participants appeared to be representative of the population within the further education sector. For example, the gender composition of the groups highlighted the low number of African–Caribbean males within sixth form colleges available to take part in such studies.

To anonymise the data collected, in line with the ethical policy of this study, the colleges' student groups were given letters to identify them, and the background information provided about the colleges is limited.

Group A consisted of ten participants including one male and nine female students. Group B consisted of nine participants, five female and four male

students. 16 were studying three A-levels, with four studying a combination of one or more A-levels alongside a BTEC course.

School A was in an inner-city local authority. It was an above-average-sized secondary school with an above-average-sized sixth form with nearly 300 students enrolled. Students came from over 20 different ethnic backgrounds. The largest ethnic groups were African-Caribbean, Black African, Other White and White British, in that order. This school's Ofsted report stated that the proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding was about the national average. Eligible pupils were those entitled to free school meals and those in local authority care. About two-fifths of students spoke English as an additional language. The sixth form accommodation was of poor quality, with a new building under construction. Despite this there was a lively engaging atmosphere, providing post-16 education to both male and female students. Students were able to follow academic and vocational pathways.

School B was in an inner-city local authority. It was a smaller than average-sized secondary school. Of the 800 students enrolled nearly 150 were in the sixth form. The clear majority came from a range of ethnic backgrounds including African-Caribbean, Black African, and Other White backgrounds. About a third of students spoke English as an additional language. The Ofsted report stated that about two-thirds of students at the school were eligible for the pupil premium funding. It was a relatively new build with excellent facilities and a stimulating environment, offering A-level and vocational options

After analysing data gathered from these first two groups of participants it was felt that it would be beneficial to access a further group of male African-Caribbean

students, due to the low proportion of male African-Caribbean students who were available to take part in the first two focus groups (3 of 19). A middle manager at a further education college C was contacted, who after much negotiation arranged for me to meet a group of four African-Caribbean male students. Unlike previous participants, these four students were taking vocational qualifications only. These students provided a better balance of representation in the overall sample group. This third group of four African-Caribbean males was self-selected from a group of 20 identified by teachers across the college. All were over the age of 16.

College C was a large further education college located in an urban area. It catered for both adult and younger students aged 14 to 19. Unemployment in the area was high with one out of every eight people actively seeking employment or training. Its Ofsted report stated that the proportion of students attaining five A* to C GCSEs including English and mathematics on entry to the college was below the average for similar colleges. Entry to higher education in the area was lower than the national average. About 20 per cent of residents had no formal qualifications, and the majority (over 80 per cent) of firms in the area were small to medium, employing ten people or fewer. The students who took part in this focus group session were following vocational pathways.

Student profiles

The student participants were asked to complete a questionnaire at the start of each focus group session to record information about themselves such as GCSE grades achieved, race, gender, current programmes, and subjects studied. This section presents this data gathered from the participants. To anonymise the data collected, in line with the study's ethical policy, students' names and dates of birth

were not recorded. The data showed that all the 23 students were aged 17-19 and hence over the age of 16. Two were in their first year of study and one was retaking the first year. By attending the sessions all students had self-identified themselves as Black. During the completion of the profile questionnaire students defined their own ethnicity. Of the 23 students, all of them attending sixth form college (19) had five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C. One of the 19 sixth form college students indicated that their mathematics GCSE was pending, and the other 18 indicated that they had achieved English and Mathematics at grades A* to C. B and C were the most common grades. Five students did not list the individual GCSEs they had achieved. Nine of the students had taken additional qualifications. Of the four students attending the Further Education College none had achieved GCSEs in English or mathematics grade A* to C. These students were studying for level 2 BTEC diplomas, equivalent to GCSEs. The courses studied by the student focus group participants, their genders and ethnicities are given in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4 below:

Ethnicity	Gender	Courses studied
Black Caribbean / Jamaican	Male	A-levels: Biology, Psychology, Sociology
Black Caribbean	Female	A-levels: Mathematics, Physics, Economics
Black Caribbean	Female	A-levels: Geography, Art, Media
Black Caribbean	Female	A-levels: Art, Photography, Media
Black Caribbean	Female	A-levels: English literature, Sociology, Media studies
Black Caribbean	Female	A-levels: English literature, Sociology, Drama
Black Caribbean	Female	A-levels: Psychology, Biology, Spanish
Black Caribbean	Female	A-levels: Psychology, Sociology BTEC: Science
Mixed Caribbean	Female	A-levels: History, Media studies, Psychology

Table 2: Group 'A' student participants' ethnicity, gender and courses studied

Ethnicity	Gender	Courses studied
Black Caribbean	male	A-levels: Law, English literature, Sociology
Black Caribbean	male	A-levels: Maths, Media, Economics
Black Caribbean	female	A-levels: Sociology, English literature, History
Black Caribbean	female	A-levels: History, Sociology, Politics
Black African	Male	A-levels: Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry
Black African	female	A-levels: Media studies, Sociology, English literature BTEC: health and social care
Black African	female	A-levels: Mathematics BTEC: applied science
Black African	female	A-levels: History, Sociology, Politics.
British Afghan	male	A-levels: Physics, Chemistry, Biology
Pakistani	female	A level: Film studies BTEC Extended diploma: ICT

Table 3: Group 'B' student participants' ethnicity, gender and courses studied

Ethnicity	Gender	Courses studied
Black Caribbean	Male	BTEC diploma level 2: Sports and Public Services
Black Caribbean	Male	BTEC diploma level 2: Sports and Public Services
Black Caribbean	Male	BTEC diploma level 2: Sports and Public Services
Black Caribbean	Male	BTEC diploma level 2: Sports and Public Services

Table 4: Group 'C' student participants' ethnicity, gender and courses studied

As demonstrated in Figure 5 below, most of the student participants were of African-Caribbean descent. The second largest group was Black African students.

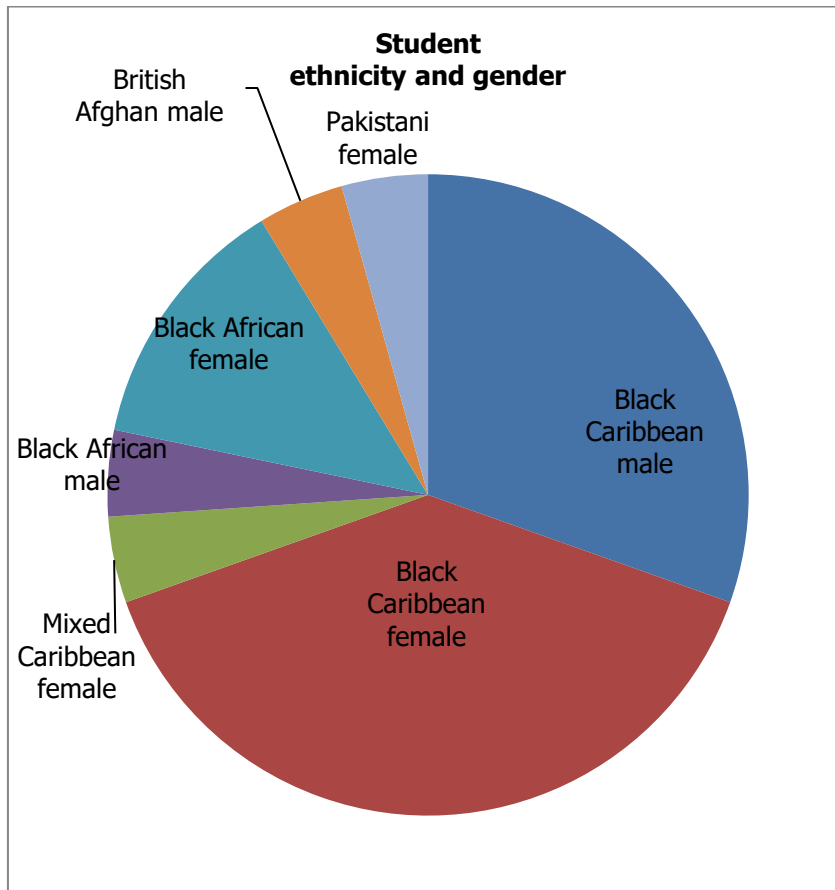


Figure 5: Student ethnicity and gender

Of the 23 students, nine were age 17 and eleven were age 18. 19 were in their second year of study. 18 students had achieved mathematics and English at GCSE grades A*-C. 17 students had taken full GCSE courses, however, four had been put on foundation level courses for their GCSEs including their maths and English. The remaining two had been entered for some of their GCSEs at foundation level. The maximum grade achievable on a foundation level course is C. Now that they were attending further education, 16 students were studying A level programmes, three were following a mixture of A-levels and BTEC level 3 programmes, and the four college-based students were studying BTEC level 2 programmes.

Questions for students

The following eleven questions were designed to gather data from the student focus group participants relevant to the research questions, including information about the factors that contribute to the students' academic achievement. These factors included students' attitudes to the education process, the effect of teachers' expectations, the influence of family and friends and the impact upon students of current policy and practice in further education. The themes that emerge from the students' responses to these questions may highlight discriminatory or racist practices in the English education system, examples of everyday racism as outlined in critical race theory (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017).

Two questions aimed to collect information about the factors that contribute to students' achievement or underachievement at this stage of their education. The objective was to gain a more detailed understanding of the hidden complexities that contribute to this continuing academic achievement gap for this group of students, including the influence of peer groups:

1. Why did you choose the courses you are studying?
2. What do friends on and outside of the course think of you doing these courses?

Four questions were devised to seek students' views on the expectations that others may have for them, students' aspirations for the future, and how they may change.

3. What expectations do people have of you academically, for example family, friends, and tutors?

4. What are your aspirations for the future?
5. Have they changed since starting, including higher education and employment plans?
6. If they have changed why?

Three questions were used to investigate whether teachers' expectations could become internalised by students and be a significant factor in influencing achievement. These questions were also designed to discover additional external influences such as family and friends:

7. What does academic achievement mean to you?
8. What factors influence your academic achievement in a positive way? (Self, teacher, parents/carers/ friends)
9. What factors influence your academic achievement in a negative way?

Two further questions investigated the impact on the students of the current education policy and practice in the further education and skills sector. These questions were also designed to discover if micro-aggressions and in particular micro-invalidations could affect these students' attitudes:

10. What topics acknowledge or value ethnic diversity?
11. Which aspects of the curriculum reflect your ethnicity?

Conduct of the focus groups

Three different groups of student participants were recruited to participate in the research, two groups from sixth form colleges and one group from a further

education college. After reflecting on the outcome of the first two focus group sessions and their lack of male representation it was thought necessary to undertake a third session with a focus on recruiting more male students of African-Caribbean heritage. All students in these sessions were over 16 years of age and most students were in the second year of their studies. The two sixth form college sessions took place in March 2015 and the further education college session in March 2016.

It was important to consider the logistics for the setting up of the venue, allowing enough time to check the venue and facilities. Careful management of sessions was necessary to keep each group of young people focused on the topic and to prevent boredom or distraction setting in. I was aware of the importance of not directing the discussion according to my own opinions, and it was important to ensure that everyone had the opportunity to contribute equally. One and half hours were set aside to complete the focus group activity.

Resources required for each focus group included a Post-it flip-chart pad with adhesive pages, a standard Post-it pad for each student, packets of small coloured adhesive dots for voting, and a medium-tip black pen for each student. One flip chart page was prepared for each focus group question and these were placed around the classroom walls.

Each session started by introducing the researcher, describing the purpose of the research and outlining the focus group process. Students were reminded that they were free to withdraw at any time if they so wished. A pre-focus group questionnaire was given to the students at the start of each session to confirm

that they were all over the age of 16, and to gather additional data such as GCSE grades achieved, race, gender and current programmes and subjects studied.

Ground rules were shared with the participants to ensure that the discussions took place within ethical boundaries; including issues of confidentiality, respect for each another and an assurance that there were no right or wrong responses. Each question was introduced in turn and time was given for the students to respond by writing their answers on Post-it notes which they attached to the question's flip chart page. Students were encouraged to discuss the meaning of questions with each other. However, it was important that each participant recorded their personal interpretations and beliefs on the Post-it notes without being influenced by the other participants. These written answers helped to capture the data during a very interactive and lively group environment and ensured that all participants were able to record their experiences, a key element of critical race methodology. They were requested not to discuss their answers with the other group members to ensure that each was able to express their own opinion. These personal answers helped to ensure that the voices of all participants were recorded. Students were encouraged to give their responses in full sentences as this would give a fuller meaning than the use of just single words. It was explained that they were free to give as many written responses as they wished to each question and that there were no right or wrong answers.

After answering all the questions, the students worked together to reflect on their responses to four of the questions. For questions three and eight, on the flip chart page they grouped their answers into a set of categories that they had identified and for questions seven and nine they reflected on each answer in turn. They then discussed the relative importance of each category or answer, and by attaching an

adhesive coloured dot on the flip chart page, voted for the one that they considered to be of most significance. The flip chart pages containing the students' written Post-it responses for each question, the students' categories and the vote stickers formed the raw data for analysis. Two samples of the completed flip chart pages are provided in Appendix F (p. 292).

To conform with the ethical guidelines (p. 91), at the end of each session time was allocated in case any student needed to discuss on a one-to-one basis any difficult issues they had had with the session content. Data collected was in the form of the students' responses to the anonymous pre-focus group questionnaires, and their answers to the focus group questions handwritten onto Post-it notes. Any personally identifiable information was destroyed.

To ensure the quality of the data collected, feedback was sought from the first focus group session. Some student participants highlighted questions 7, 10 and 11 as being a little confusing or hard to understand, others struggled to differentiate between questions 10 and 11, and one student suggested that question 10 was irrelevant to subjects like maths. A student suggested that the researcher should not be afraid of responses that are brutally honest and added that in their opinion the study was succinct and to the point. Another student found the use of different coloured dots for voting confusing.

In response to this feedback and to ensure that students were able to engage fully with the questions, in the second and third focus groups additional verbal guidance was given. To ensure a distinction between positive and negative responses the students were asked not to include a middle category when categorising responses to the question asking about expectations people had of

them. When considering what academic achievement meant to them, the students were asked to think about their desired outcome and why it was important to them. During voting, the students were invited to consider all the responses given, re-evaluate their response to the question, and then vote for the answer which was most important to them. The students were told that the colours of the stickers used for voting were irrelevant. In considering which topics acknowledged or valued ethnic diversity, the students were asked to include subjects across the whole curriculum. When considering which aspects of the curriculum reflected their ethnicity, the students were required to consider just the subjects they were currently studying.

The first group (A) had worked through the list of questions at their own pace; however, following reflection on my experience of this first session, I changed the process to gain more control of it. For groups B and C each question was introduced in turn and the participants did not move on to the next until all had completed their answers. Introducing each question in turn helped the process by providing further clarity for the students. Before completing questions ten and eleven groups B and C were asked to discuss the question as a group before writing their responses.

Participants' validation of the research method was sought at each stage of the research process by seeking feedback from the participants regarding their understanding of and the clarity of the research questions and process. This use of several different participant groups provided some validation of the data collected.

Teachers' profiles and questionnaire

The six teachers who took part in the research were selected by their institutions, and all taught one or more of the student participants. There were two male and four female teacher participants, all of who were of White ethnicity. Organisation A selected three teachers who all taught sociology, and organisation B selected an art teacher, an economics teacher, and a teacher of law and business studies.

About 45 minutes were allocated during the visits to organisation A and B to complete the teachers' questionnaires. I started each session by introducing myself, describing the purpose of the research and outlining the process for completing the questionnaire. I was present in the room as the teachers answered the questions to provide clarifications if needed, ensuring that the data collected was less likely to be mis-compiled later. The aim was to give the participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms.

The teachers' questionnaire was prepared in advance to facilitate a consistent data collection process and consisted of eight questions designed to gather data relevant to the research questions. These questions aimed to gain an insight into these teachers' understanding of students' achievement; expectations of certain groups; perceptions of ethnic groups including levels of motivation and aspiration; insights into how they could influence motivation and achievement; the influence of peers; ideas for improving the curricula; and how policy and practice could be improved.

Three questions aimed to gain an insight into the teachers' understanding of what student achievement meant to them, and to understand if they were aware of the

differences between different student groups' academic achievement and the possible reasons for any such difference:

1. What does learners' achievement mean to you?
2. How does the academic achievement of ethnic groups of learners differ?
3. Why do you think this is the case?

Three questions were intended to gather teachers' opinions on how policy and practice could be changed to gain a positive impact on students' achievement:

4. What strategies may improve African-Caribbean learners' success?
5. How can teaching be made more relevant to learners from different cultural backgrounds?
6. What influences learners' levels of motivation?

One question was devised to gain insight into teachers' expectations of different groups of students and factors that may create these expectations.

7. What affects teachers' expectations for different groups of learners?

The last question was intended to explore further teachers' perceptions of minority ethnic groups of students. It asked for their opinions on students' levels of motivation and aspiration, their ideas for improving the current curricula to meet students' needs, their insights into how they feel they can influence students' motivation and achievement, and their opinions on the possible influence of students' peers.

8. Thinking specifically about the achievement of different ethnic groups of learners:

- 1) How could levels of motivation and aspirations be improved?

- 2) How could curricula be improved?
- 3) Do teachers' expectations have influence?
- 4) Do peer groups have influence?

Data analysis process

Information was generated by the participants during the sessions as they recorded their answers to the questions posed based upon their experiences and perspectives.

Two approaches were deployed in the analysis of the data. Analysis by research questions drew together all the relevant data for each issue of concern. Cohen et al. (2011) suggested that this form of analysis reminds the reader of the main concerns of the research, thus closing the circle from research question to conclusions. Additionally, data was coded into themes, looking for patterns and similarities in the data (Cohen et al, 2011).

The three research questions guiding the data analysis related to African-Caribbean students at ages 16-18. These aimed to discover what were the aspirations of students aged 16-18 especially in relation to learning, progression and future profession, to look for factors that contributed to students' academic achievement or underachievement and to gain the participants opinions on how policy and practice in education could be improved. Each research question was broken down into themes of interest for the focus groups and teachers' questionnaire. This enabled themes to be studied such as aspirations, motivation and race in the curriculum.

Analysis of the data occurred at different stages. For example, for question eight “what factors influence your academic achievement in a positive way?” student participants were involved in the analysis by discussing and organising their responses into categories and then voting for the category each student considered to be the most important. The outcome of this activity can be seen in Figure 13 (p. 147).

The raw data recorded in the student focus groups and teachers’ questionnaires was transcribed into Appendices G and H. Colour coding was then used to identify patterns in the students’ and teachers’ responses, allowing common elements from these answers to be grouped into categories or themes. As suggested by Cohen et al. (2011) such coding enables the researcher to collate related information. The outcome of this coding can be seen in Appendix G (p. 294) for the students’ focus groups and Appendix H (p. 311) for the teachers’ questionnaires. The data collected is presented in Chapter 5, organised by the key themes identified during the coding, and some of the data is presented in pie or bar chart form. Chapter 6 relates the data from Chapter 5 to the research questions and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Summary

The chapter commenced by presenting an overview of the research process. To test and refine the data collection tools and techniques an initial study was undertaken, which highlighted the challenges in finding establishments willing to take part in such studies. For the main study two sixth forms and one college participated in the research, and the student participants’ profiles were recorded. The data collection processes and questions were described, including the focus

group and the teachers' semi-structured questionnaire sessions. Finally, the methods used for data analysis were outlined.

Reflections on the research process are given in Chapter 8, and the next chapter presents the data gathered from the three student focus group sessions and the two sets of teacher questionnaires.

Chapter 5: Data presentation

Introduction

This chapter presents the students' responses from the focus group sessions and the teachers' responses to the semi-structured questionnaires. The student focus groups are identified using the letters A, B and C, the sociology teachers by the numbers four, five and six, and the other three teachers by their subject areas. The teachers had also been given the opportunity to record their personal ideas and opinions which may differ from those of the establishment. Pseudonyms were not used to identify participants for ethical reasons, as outlined in Chapter 3, and due to the practical limitations of Metaplan outlined in the data collection methods section of Chapter 3.

In Chapter 6: Data discussion and analysis, this data is discussed in detail in relation to the literature review and the research questions, specifically the aspirations of the students, the factors that influence their educational achievement, and issues relating to education policy and practice.

Student focus group data

The data collected from the three focus group sessions are presented in the following four sections, which investigate student motivation and peer influence, consider students' aspirations and the expectations of others, record students' thoughts on academic achievement and the influence of others on this, and question the inclusiveness of the curricula the students were studying. Appendix G (p. 294) contains the complete set of students' responses to the focus group questions and the outcomes of their voting, and for each question, common

themes seen in the responses were highlighted using different colours, and the number of times each theme was mentioned was recorded.

Motivation for subject choice

The first two focus group questions asked the students why they had chosen the courses they were studying and what influence their peers had on their subject choices. The students gave three main reasons for choosing the courses they were studying, summarised in Figure 6 below:

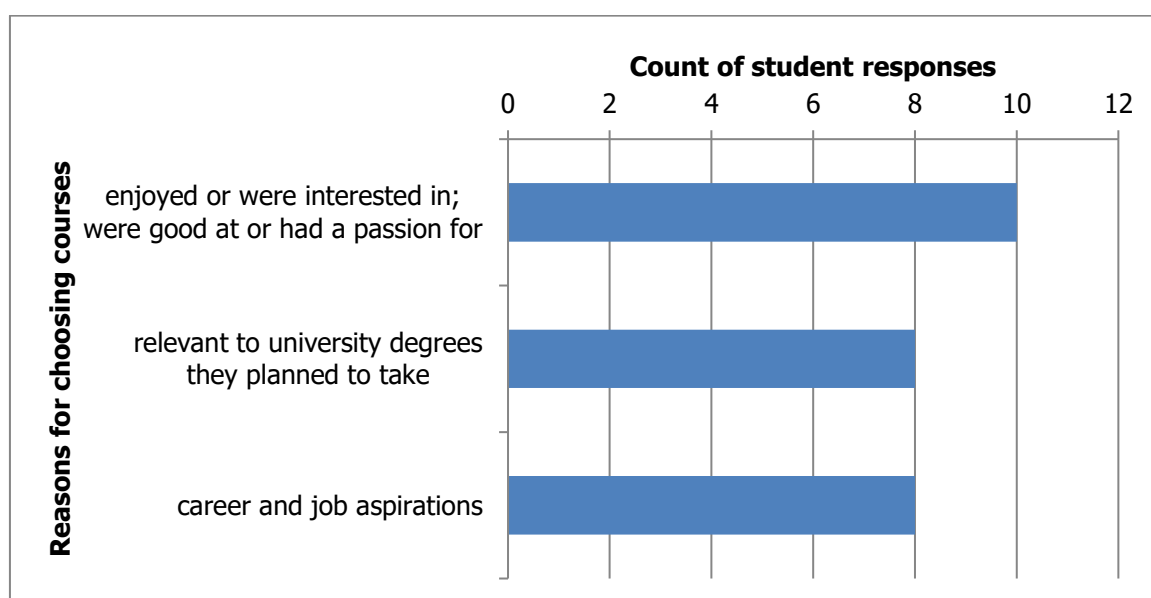


Figure 6: Students' reasons for choosing courses studied

The literature relating to student motivation is discussed in the Literature review section on student attitude and aspirations (p. 69).

The most common reason for choosing a course was enjoyment, interest in or aptitude for a subject. Students used phrases like "I enjoy", "my favourite" and "a passion for" when talking about a subject. Subjects mentioned included history, biology, psychology, mathematics and sports:

I've always had a passion for history and it has always been my favourite subject.

(Student, focus group A)

I study maths because I enjoy it.

(Student, focus group B)

I enjoy biology and psychology more than most subjects.

(Student, focus group A)

Many students had chosen subjects that they enjoyed studying, supported by Payne et al. (2009) who found that black students had a positive attitude towards their education. Furthermore, the students aspired to attend university, choosing subjects relevant to the university degree courses they aspired to study. University course aspirations included psychology with sociology, politics and international relations, and English literature with criminology.

I decided to do these courses because they are useful for the degree I am applying for.

(Student, focus group A)

I chose English literature due to my aspirations to go on and study literature at university. I also chose sociology, so I can study criminology at university in a joint honours degree.

(Student, focus group B)

I hope to study politics and international relations at university.

(Student, focus group B)

University aspirations would seem to be a strong motivation to achieve in Further Education.

Career aspirations were also said to influence subject choice. Students were interested in the fashion industry, information technology, physiotherapy and professional sports. Unusual reasons for choosing courses included a subject's respectability, a subject seen as complementary to others taken, a subject taken to fill a space, and subjects taken following family advice. Students from focus group C noted the following ambitions:

To become a personal trainer.

(Student, focus group C)

To become a physiotherapist.

(Student, focus group C)

I want to make it into pro-sports, football.

(Student, focus group C)

These students had professional careers in mind and had selected courses that could support their aspirations. They seemed to enjoy their subjects and viewed education as a route to a career, contrary to the dominant and racist ideology noted by Law et al. (2012) that many African-Caribbean students have low educational aspirations.

When asked to consider what their friends thought of the courses they were taking, the most common theme found was that friends were supportive or happy for them, as shown in Figure 7 below:

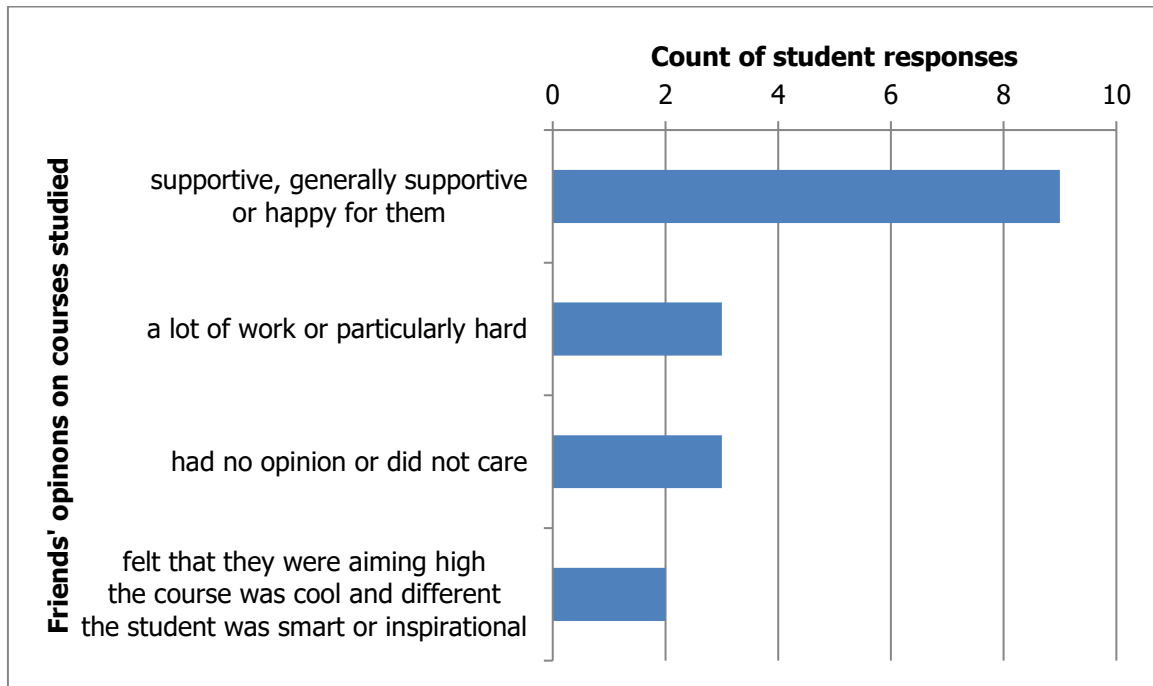


Figure 7: What friends thought of the courses studied

Nine students noted that their friends felt happy with or were supportive of their course choice, of which five mentioned that friends were studying at least one of the same subjects as them. Others reported friends' opinions that linked aspirations to course choice, such as going to university, more options later in life, following a dream, aiming high, or bettering the student's life. Examples of friends' supportive opinions included that the course chosen was a good choice, interesting, challenging, inspirational, respectable, surprising, cool, or different:

They think it's a good choice and that they link very well to what I'd like to choose in university.

(Student, focus group A)

They think the subjects I've chosen are respectable and give me options later in life.

(Student, focus group A)

My friends on the course think this is good as we are trying to better our lives; whilst my friends outside of school think what I'm doing is inspirational as it means I'm not in their position.

(Student, focus group B)

The data shows that many of the students had supportive friends, likely to encourage and support them in their academic achievement, contrary to the White ideology that African-Caribbean students are subject to anti-school peer pressure as outlined by Law et al. (2012).

A few friends were said to have more neutral feelings about students' courses, for example not having an interest in the subject, and a few were said not to care or have no opinion on a student's course choices, for example:

They are happy that we are doing something that we like.

(Student, focus group C)

My friends think that it is a lot of work doing the subject that I have chosen.

(Student, focus group A)

These negative attitudes may be the result of negative stereotyping of students' ethnicity that these friends have taken on board (DeAngelis, 2009).

Expectations and aspirations

The next four focus group questions were developed to explore students' aspirations and others' expectations of them.

When asked about other people's expectations of them, students overwhelmingly indicated that they were expected by others to achieve good grades or to do well. Other expectations identified were to meet target grades or to go to university (Figure 8, below).

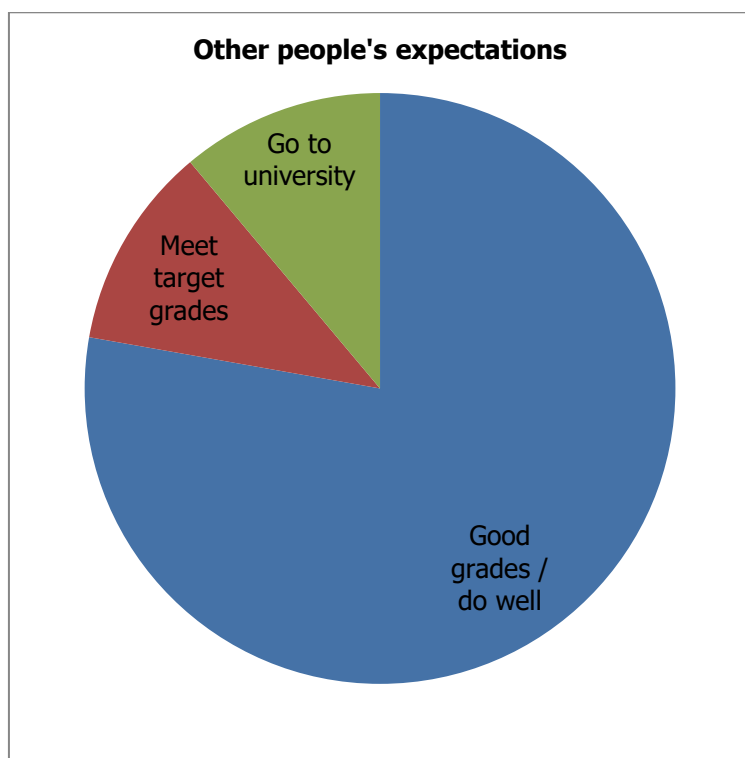


Figure 8: Other people's expectations

The literature relating to student expectations and aspirations is discussed in the Literature review sections on student attitude and aspirations (p. 69) and stereotyping and academic achievement (p. 76).

The students overwhelmingly indicated that families and parents had high expectations of them academically. Family expectations included achieving predicted grades, good grades, and grades B to A*, as well as more long-term expectations such as to go to university, to make something of their lives, or to do well. One student mentioned that their family would be proud of their

achievements, and another said that their family had high expectations but did not pressurise them. For example:

They expect me to achieve my predicted grades or even higher.

(Student, focus group A)

Family want me to academically do well and be successful.

(Student, focus group A)

This data suggests that most students' families are supportive and encouraging, and unlikely to be a factor that contributes to low academic achievement, contrary to the racial stereotype that such students' families are unsupportive (Law et al., 2012).

However, some students indicated that families' expectations could be both positive and negative. One student had a step-mother who they believed wanted them to fail academically, and another said that an estranged father had little faith in their ability. Another noted that their family did not seem to understand their level of ability. From the viewpoint of social justice, these examples highlight the importance of encouragement and support at school for every child to achieve their full potential, regardless of their race.

Hence, it is important that teachers have high expectations for all their students. However, during voting, friends' and teachers' expectations were identified as being both positive and negative. Teachers' positive expectations included to do well, to do okay, and to go to university, for example:

Teachers - was on gifted and talented ... depends on the teacher.

(Student, focus group A)

Teachers ... high expectations and to go to university.

(Student, focus group A)

However, three of the 23 students identified teachers as having only negative expectations of them, writing that teachers were not encouraging:

I don't think teachers encouraged me in the past.

(Student, focus group B)

I feel through secondary school I [was not] encouraged.

(Student, focus group B)

One student commented that teachers had high expectations of him, however, when questioned further this was to achieve a grade C at GCSE, a modest grade, suggesting that racial stereotyping may be operating in this case.

Most friends were said to have positive or high expectations, for example one student wrote that friends were supportive and pushed them to work hard.

Another wrote that their friends did not have an opinion, and another wrote that they felt overwhelmed by the expectations of others. One student named the police, perhaps to perpetuate the stereotype they felt the police held:

Police want me to fail.

(Student, focus group B)

Before voting, the students grouped their responses into the three categories family, friends and others (including teachers). Each of these was broken down into the sub-categories of people with positive expectations only, people with both positive and negative expectations, and people with negative expectations only.

Students were free to vote in more than one category if they wished. The

outcome of voting (Figure 9 below) showed that most students felt that their families had positive expectations for their academic achievement. However, friends were viewed as having both positive and negative expectations, and most of the members of the 'others' group, which included teachers, were identified as having negative expectations.

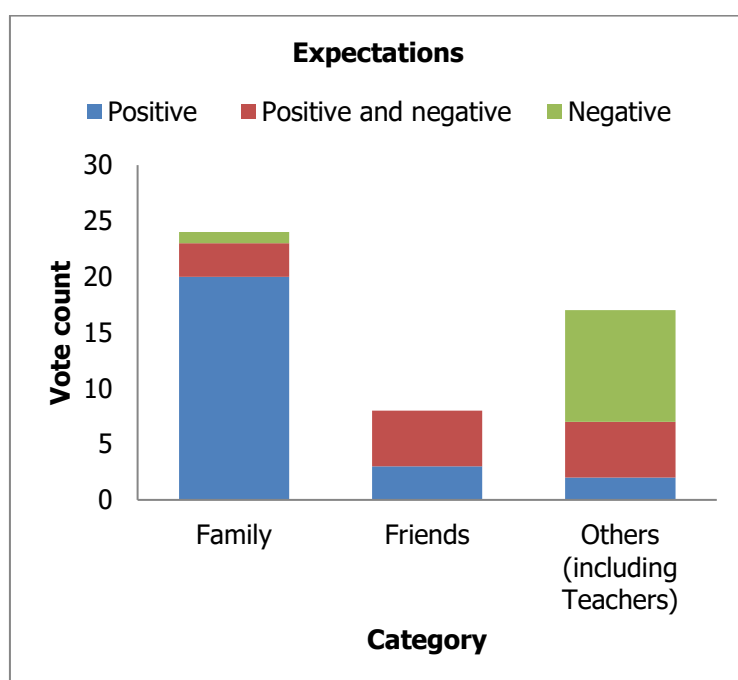


Figure 9: Sources of positive and negative expectations - outcome of vote

Petty (2004) noted that teachers commonly hold stereotypes for groups of students, for example that African-Caribbean students are not academically ambitious, which could explain the negative expectations the students said teachers tended to have. Negative racial stereotypes such as this may influence friends and even the students themselves, damaging students' self-belief and leading to lower levels of achievement.

Most students (19 of 23) aspired to attend university to study subjects such as history, law, politics and international relations, psychology with sociology, biomedical sciences, and chemistry:

In the future, I want to complete a four-year history degree, then do a law conversion course to become a solicitor.

(Student, focus group A)

Such aspirations are likely to be a strong motivating factor for these students to succeed academically. One student had a plan to take a foundation year course to qualify for university entry. After university, aspirations included being able to live comfortably, to travel to America or Canada, and to do a master's degree. One student was thinking about a gap year for travelling and another was thinking about a 1-year work placement as part of their university course:

I want to go to university, but academically I don't know what I want to do there.

(Student, focus group A)

Finish university with a chemistry degree.

(Student, focus group B)

Those students that did not mention university aspired to be successful in their lives, including to love what they were doing, to have a good career, to travel the world, and to be rich.

My aspirations in the future are to be happy in life and be successful.

(Student, focus group C)

My aspiration for the future is to make it into football and to earn as much money as possible.

(Student, focus group C)

Students' long-term aspirations were varied, but many aspired to a career in a profession, for example as a solicitor, accountant, actuary, pilot, teacher, radiotherapist, educational psychologist, paediatrician or physiotherapist (Figure 10, below). Such aspirations require students to achieve highly in further education so that they can obtain a place at a good university.

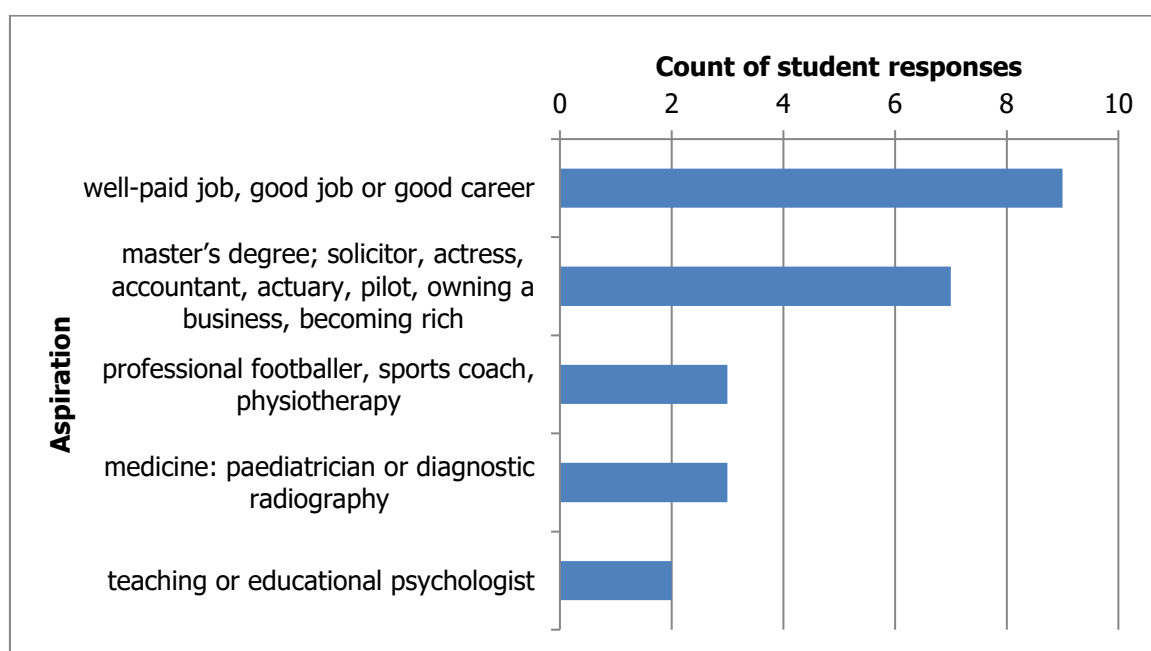


Figure 10: Students' long-term aspirations

Other career aspirations mentioned included actress, journalist, sports coach and criminal investigator, for example:

To be a successful accountant / actuary with a good job working in the city.

(Student, focus group A)

Join the RAF to become a pilot. After I finish in the RAF, join commercial airlines.

(Student, focus group B)

I see myself becoming physio or coach and I want to be well off.

(Student, focus group C)

Many students (13) had changed their aspirations since they started further education. Some had changed their university course aspirations, for example to study history instead of law, forensics instead of medicine, to take sociology and psychology together, shifting from journalism to history to law, and to study chemistry instead of physics, for example:

I realised I wanted to study both sociology and psychology to broaden my options.

(Student, focus group A)

Change from physics course in university to chemistry course in university.

(Student, focus group B)

I changed sixth form. I wanted to be a lawyer.

(Student, focus group B)

One student said that they had grown in determination and another wished to broaden their options. One student had failed their first year but was inspired to continue with their subject choices by a motivational speaker.

Students indicated that their aspirations had changed for a variety of different reasons, for example after finding a subject they became interested in, liked most, was better at, or became passionate about. Others felt that they had to be more realistic in their ambitions, for example after having discovered that their course choices were not compatible with the university subject they desired to study. Others changed their aspirations after becoming aware of options they had not

known of previously. One student changed aspirations to what they felt was a more altruistic career.

Law et al. (2012) noted that white ideology stereotypes African-Caribbean students as having low academic aspirations, however the students in this study appeared to be thinking carefully about their futures and working towards their goals. They believed that they could achieve the academic results they would need to fulfil their ambitions.

Achievement and influences

The next three focus group questions were used to investigate the meaning of academic achievement to the students and to discover the factors that they felt influenced that achievement in both a positive and a negative way. These influences included the opinions and actions of their families and friends.

The students first discussed what achievement meant to them, wrote their responses to this question, and then voted for the response which they felt was most significant. Nine students indicated that to them, achievement meant making their parents or other people proud. Making themselves as well as their family and friends proud meant a lot to them. Eight others viewed achievement as having the potential to enable them to have a better life or career in the future. One regarded it as essential to gain access to higher education and their career aspirations

(Figure 11, below).

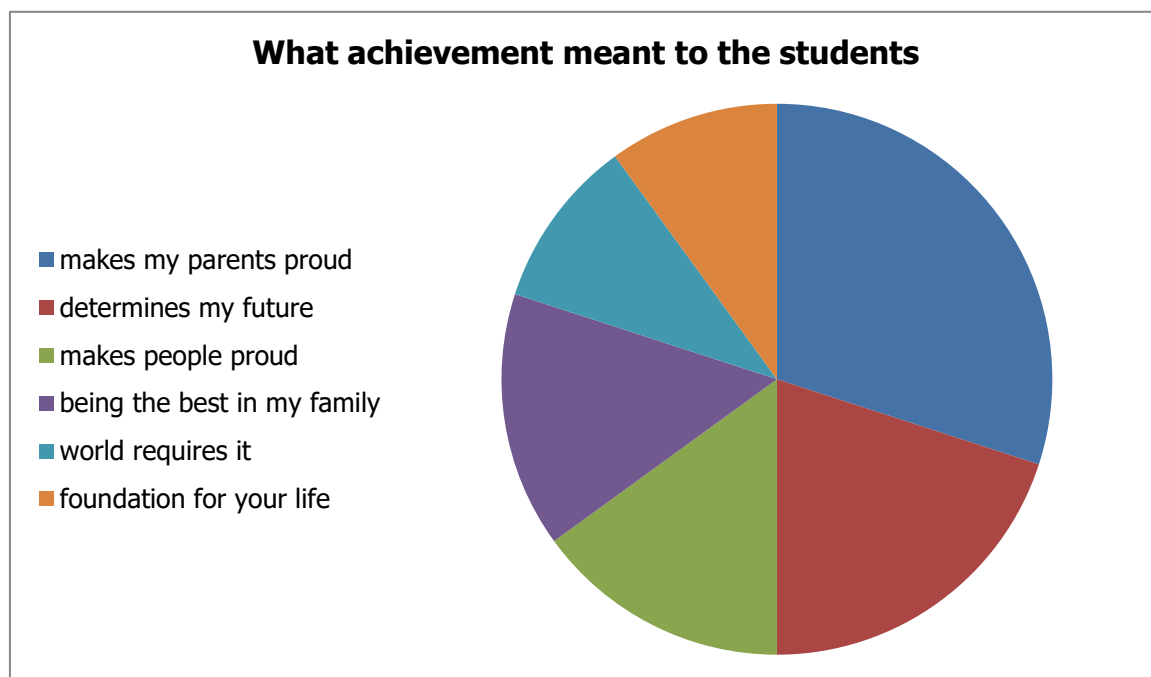


Figure 11: What achievement meant to the students – popular themes

The literature relating to student achievement and influences is discussed in the Literature review sections 'Racism as normal' (p.41), 'Student attitude and aspirations' (p. 69) and 'Stereotyping and academic achievement' (p. 76).

Students' thoughts on academic achievement included:

Academic achievement to me means a lot, as I feel as though it'll determine my future, both academically and my successes.

(Student, focus group A)

To be successful in life and hit some goals that I may have in the future.

(Student, focus group A)

Making myself, family and friends proud.

(Student, focus group C)

I may move out of relative poverty, getting further in life and aiming to get a better life for my family.

(Student, focus group B)

The dominant white ideology is that African-Caribbean students do not value education (Payne et al., 2009). However, the students within this study did appear to value education as a route to a better life, and desired to make family members and others proud of them.

The students went on to discuss and record the factors that influenced their academic achievement in a positive way and to vote for the response which they felt was most significant (Figure 12, below).

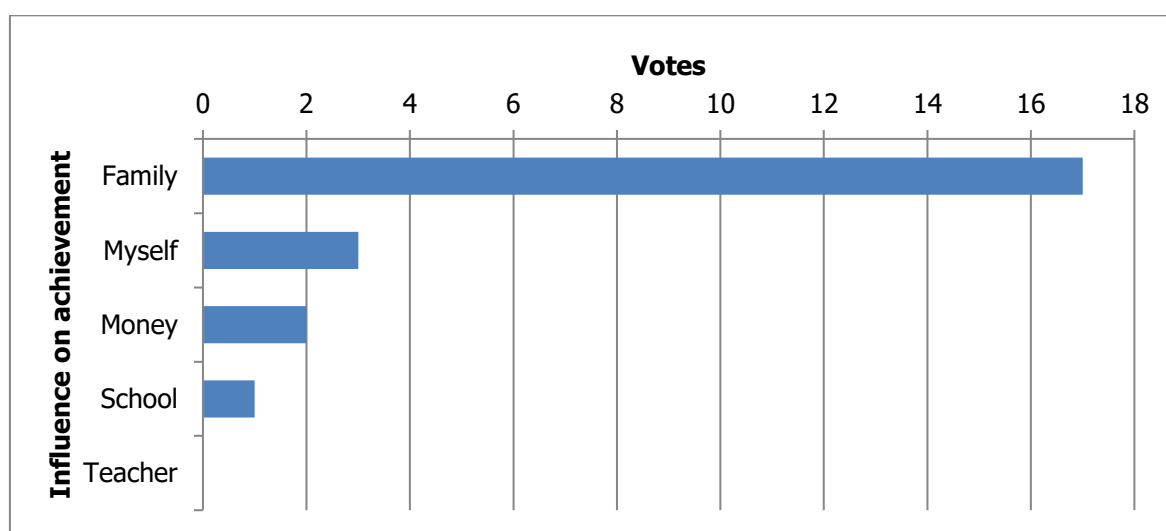


Figure 12: Positive influences on students' achievement – outcome of vote

The students emphasised the importance of family support as a positive influence on their academic achievement, having received positive encouragement from family members such as parents and mothers but also brothers and grandparents:

My parents encourage me to do well.

(Student, focus group A)

My mother has always made it clear that my qualifications belong to me.

(Student, focus group A)

Family, because they all have a career and they want me to have my own.

(Student, focus group C)

Parents' support and encouragement, and students' desire to make their families proud were recurrent themes found throughout this study, contrary to the dominant white ideology that Black parents are not interested in their children's education (Law et al., 2012).

The students also voted for self-motivation as being important, with enjoyment of a subject said to be a key factor, as well as the desire to feel pride in their achievements and to make their parents proud:

I go to places with few distractions to revise.

(Student, focus group A)

Other students were driven to make something of their lives, to succeed, to make money, to be rich or to do better than their parents:

My ambition to succeed in the future, pride, my desire to be rich.

(Student, focus group B)

Make sure that I do better than my parents.

(Student, focus group B)

Many students in the study showed this strong self-motivation to succeed, which in a just and equal society is an essential attribute for exam success.

One student strived to be able to support their parents and to see them not struggle. Surprisingly, only one student voted for the positive influence of their school, and although teachers were identified as a positive influence by the students no one voted for them, suggesting a disconnection between teachers and these students. Woolley et al. (2010) argued that positive student-teacher relationships contribute to academic success.

In their answers regarding positive influences on their academic achievement, some students indicated that friends and friendship groups were supportive and encouraging, with all members of the friendship group being equally driven to succeed:

My friendship groups are quite driven, we all encourage each other.

(Student, focus group A)

Friends help because you want to be equal with your friends in an academic way.

(Student, focus group B)

Supportive friendships clearly play a role in student achievement, despite the white ideology that African-Caribbean students experience anti-school peer pressure (Law et al., 2012).

Some teachers were said to be positive influences, for example by providing support for essay writing and revision, or by praising students' work.

My teachers, who may praise my work, which is a booster.

(Student, focus group A)

However, other teachers were said to lack patience with students, or seen not to care, or to make revision difficult:

Some (teachers) are very positive and want you to do well; others lack patience or are not bothered.

(Student, focus group A)

One student noted the pressure from the school to do well as a positive influence.

Hargrove and Seay (2011) noted the importance of teachers' perceptions of students' ability, arguing that some teachers may identify students from some minority backgrounds as being less intelligent than other students. This is an example of everyday racism (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017).

The students next discussed the factors that influenced their academic achievement in a negative way, recorded their responses to this question, and then voted for the response which they felt was most important (Figure 13, below).

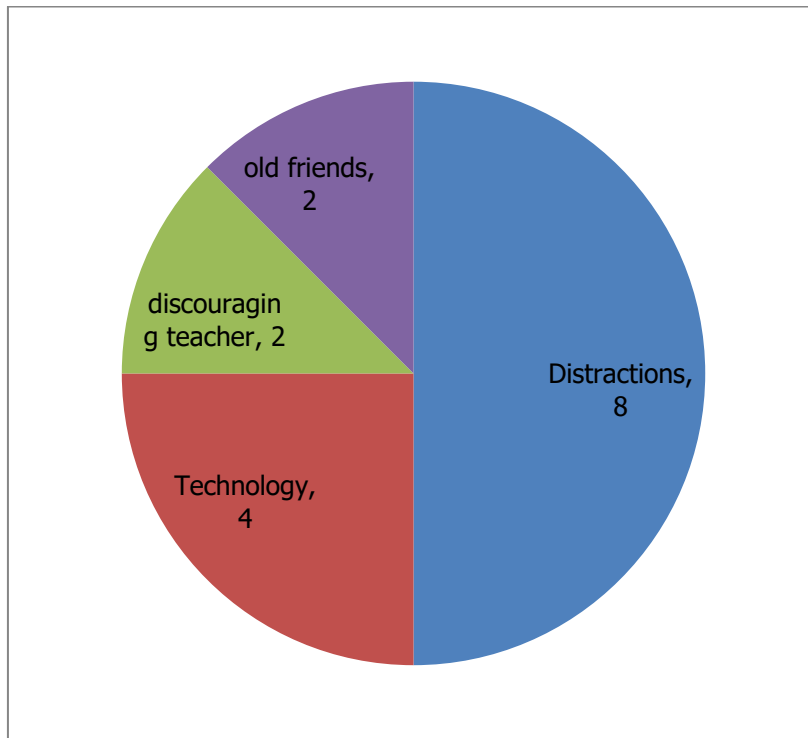


Figure 13: Negative influences on students' achievement - outcome of vote

Students identified several factors with a negative influence on their achievement. The two with the most votes were distractions and technology. Students could be distracted by a variety of electronic devices such as phones, laptops, and TVs. Distracting activities included reading online blogs, movies, games and social media. Students also wrote that they found personal time management difficult, mentioning after-school commitments, procrastination and caring for others:

Distractions when revising impacts my achievement, for example TV [and] online blogs.

(Student, focus group A)

Time management, due to after school commitment. A huge factor is also procrastination.

(Student, focus group A)

However, such distractions are unlikely to have a significantly greater impact on African-Caribbean students than they do on other groups of students.

One student wrote that they found it hard to see their parents struggle financially. Additionally, teachers' negative attitudes were said to have a damaging impact, with a student noting a negative impact resulting from a teacher's low expectations based on the student's past exam results:

I think teachers when they say because I got a certain grade [in the past] I can't do something.

(Student, focus group B)

Another student noted a negative impact on their achievement due to what they described as teacher laziness or not getting along with a teacher.

Curricula and ethnicity

The last two questions investigated the inclusive nature of the curricula the students were studying. This is important, as students who feel that their ethnicity is excluded from the curriculum may experience racial micro-invalidations as a consequence of studying that curriculum (DeAngelis, 2009), discussed in 'Racism as normal' (p. 46).

When discussing topics that acknowledge or value ethnic diversity, the students could distinguish between acknowledgement and valuing. Students' answers showed that most of the subjects they studied did not acknowledge or value ethnicity and where it was acknowledged it was often given negative connotations. Very few subjects were seen to give a positive value to ethnic

diversity, and only art was said to have a wholly positive attitude, as can be seen in Figure 14 below.

Not acknowledged	Negative	Positive and negative	Positive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physics • maths • economics • English literature • drama 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health & social care • psychology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sociology • media studies • history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • art

Figure 14: Subjects' acknowledgement and valuing of ethnic diversity

It appears that diversity and inclusion were not considered in the development of many of these curricula. Banks (2001), discussed in 'Critical pedagogy and the curriculum' (p.75), noted that students are often taught curricula that exclude contributions from non-white ethnic groups, and Reay and Mirza (1997), discussed in 'The social construct of underachievement' (p.65), noted the virtually invisible dominance of whiteness in mainstream schooling.

Neither English nor Drama was seen to acknowledge or value ethnic diversity:

Lack of representation especially in English - subjects of books and writers all white.

(Student, focus group A)

Drama - theorists are all white e.g. Brecht, Stanislavski.

(Student, focus group A)

Social justice highlights the importance of inclusive curricula that value diversity, and in English literature many black writers are available for inclusion.

Students argued that history portrays people of Black and mixed ethnicity in a negative way, for example in the civil rights movement or oppressed by apartheid and slavery, and hence did not appear to value or acknowledge the achievements of Black people:

Brief look at slavery [and] South Africa in younger years, but that was a one off, civil Rights movement course work, not shown Black queens and kings in power.

(Student, focus group A)

History ... never states the good things [that] were done by black people.

(Student, focus group B)

History ... I learned, but it was negative because I felt people judged me because of my race.

(Student, focus group C)

Black history was said to be covered superficially, even during Black history month, which was said to be a half-hearted affair. One student commented that Black Caribbean contributions to history, for example by Mary Seacole, were not mentioned.

Black history month tries to [be inclusive] but I feel it's a bit superficial. We should learn it whenever applicable with no discrimination rather than a half-hearted attempt one month a year.

(Student, focus group A)

A history curriculum with a more diverse and inclusive selection of topics would make these students feel less alienated, with topics covered in greater depth and with a less westernised focus.

Students stated that sociology in its coverage of culture and identity went some way towards acknowledging ethnic diversity. They had been taught about the work of Black sociologists such as Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall and had learned about ethnic differences in achievement and crime rates, however, this was not necessarily seen as a positive acknowledgement of ethnic diversity:

I think sociology does acknowledge ethnic diversity as sociologists like Stuart Hall acknowledge the hardship a black man will face in the U.K.
(Student, focus group B)

Sociology - culture and identity, Mary Fuller's Black girls study, crime and deviance, Gilroy and Hall.
(Student, focus group A)

Sociology was said to value ethnic diversity more than psychology did, but still insufficiently. One student remembered being taught how White actors would portray Black characters because in the past Black actors were not permitted on stage. Additionally, students noted how sociology can also portray ethnic groups in a negative light, for example by suggesting that minority ethnic groups are all comprised of one parent families, or by portraying Black people in general in a negative light.

Sociology – negative ... all ethnic groups live in lone parent families.
(Student, focus group B)

Like history, sociology has the potential to educate students on issues of race in a balanced way but appears to have failed in this case for these students, instead perpetuating stereotypes of ethnic groups.

Students had varied views as to whether psychology acknowledges or values ethnic diversity, from stating that it did not really acknowledge ethnic diversity, to stating that it was acknowledged, but not really valued. One student noted that they felt that the subject tended to make a lot of vast generalisations:

Sociology talks about ethnic differences in terms of crime rates, educational achievement etc., whereas psychology tends to make a lot of vast generalisations.

(Student, focus group A)

Media studies was identified as acknowledging diversity by several students. They had learned about Black theorists, and studied films and texts from Black filmmakers, or featuring Black actors, or reflecting Black youth culture.

In media we learn about theorists who are black. We watch films and other media text that feature black actors / were made by black film makers or contain topics that reflect black youth culture.

(Student, focus group A)

We look at representation of ethnic people ...looking into media's view.

(Student, focus group A)

The work of Black sociologists was also taught. The representation of youth and ethnic minorities in the media was a key topic mentioned by several students, as was the ways in which members of minorities may respond to the media

representations of them. Several students had considered the news media in a broader context, suggesting that there is an acknowledgement of ethnic diversity, but in a negative light, for example in the representation of Black communities, or in the involvement of Black males in riots and gangs, taking part in shootings and stabbings. One student felt that the media hated Black males.

Media represent the black community in a negative light.

(Student, focus group B)

In the media discussing the riots ... the black males were bad and in gangs.

(Student, focus group C)

Clearly media studies has the potential to present Black people in a very positive light, showcasing the work of Black artists and writers, but the students felt that their race had been portrayed in an unjust manner, risking racial micro-invalidations of students (DeAngelis, 2009).

Art students appeared to have more freedom in exploring ethnic diversity.

Students felt free to create work that reflected their culture:

You can create work that reflects your culture or issues surrounding it.

(Student, focus group A)

However, art was said not to include topics relating to ethnicity, for example it was said not to acknowledge Caribbean art or artists.

In art we don't do much on Caribbean art or artists.

(Student, focus group A)

Art clearly allows students to express their ethnicity, but its teaching could incorporate work from a more diverse collection of artists. Ladson-Billings (1995),

discussed in 'Critical pedagogy and the curriculum' (p. 71), argued that to help students to become culturally competent, elements from the students' own cultures should be incorporated into the teaching and the learning environment. This requires teachers to be culturally aware and to be sensitive to a variety of cultural backgrounds (Whiting 2009).

For the final question, students were asked to consider which subjects that they were currently studying reflected their ethnicity. Tikly et al. (2006), discussed in 'Critical pedagogy and the curriculum' (p.75), noted that to engage and not marginalise all students they should be able to identify themselves within the curriculum. Most subjects were identified as not reflecting students' ethnicity or not valuing it, as can be seen in Figure 15 below:

Not reflected	Negative	Positive and negative	Positive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physics • maths • English literature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • history • economics • science • PE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sociology • media studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • art

Figure 15: Students' experience of their ethnicity in the curriculum

Art was the only subject identified as valuing students' ethnicity. Curricula were seen to be Eurocentric, not valuing Black students:

Curriculum is extremely Eurocentric; don't see myself represented too much.

(Student, focus group A)

PE ... it wasn't positive.

(Student, focus group C)

Health and social care was said to portray Black and Asian people in a negative way:

Health and social care – saying that Black people and Asian people are all poor and deprived-bad.

(Student, focus group B)

Physics, mathematics and economics were said not to reflect ethnic diversity.

English and drama were said not to include non-white writers or theorists. Science textbooks were said only to reflect Black people in poverty. One student stated that he felt that people like him were judged solely on their sports ability. Another noted that the PE curriculum did not reflect his ethnicity.

Graham and Robinson (2004), also discussed in 'Critical pedagogy and the curriculum' (p.74), noted that school curricula were largely Eurocentric, failing to be pluralistic. Additionally, they argued that attempts to make these curricula more inclusive, for example in history, may have caused further alienation.

Teachers' insights on achievement

This section outlines teachers' responses to the questions relating to student academic achievement in the questionnaire. These first three questions were intended to give an insight into what student achievement meant to the teachers, to ascertain if they were aware of the differences between the academic achievement of different ethnic groups, and to seek their opinions on the possible reasons for this situation.

Teachers defined students' achievement in several different ways. Achievement was students growing, becoming more socially aware, and developing into self-confident young people who were aware of the wider world in which they lived. It was growth in a student's ability to set their own goals, in some cases with input from teachers. Two teachers suggested that setting of target grades for a student was often governed by that student's previous achievement at key stage 4 (age 16). This was seen to have significant consequences as low grades achieved at 16 years of age may limit possible future opportunities. It was noted by one teacher that students could achieve more:

Although I often think they can achieve more than what the data suggests.
(Teacher five, Sociology)

Two teachers viewed students' achievement as a personal matter for each student. Three viewed achievement as a form of progression which included progression to higher education, further studies or the workplace.

When asked how the academic achievement of ethnic groups of students differed, the teachers gave clear responses, although three indicated that it was hard to judge. Not all teachers were aware of the larger picture and their responses related to their immediate group of students. Responses indicated that all teachers could relate students' performance to race by indicating which groups they felt were doing well or not; for example:

I find that White British, Black African and students with central Asia backgrounds tend to perform well on test and exams.
(Teacher six, Sociology)

Four teachers noted that African-Caribbean students were underachieving. The responses indicated that they regarded this as linked to social class and that in their opinion achievement may be dependent upon a student's socio-economic background. Four responses linked achievement and high expectations to ethnic groups, for example:

Generally, I would say that Asian students achieve more highly or certainly have high expectations. With White students, I find it varies hugely on an individual basis and similarly with African-Caribbean students – generally I could say that girls achieve more highly.

(Teacher six, Sociology)

These teachers may have seen government exam performance data broken down by ethnicity, and this may lower their expectations for these students, a manifestation of structural inequality. Rogers and Freiberg (1994) noted that it is one person's perception of another that determines how they treat that other person, meaning that stereotypes influence behaviour. A negative stereotype can cause a person to lower their expectations of another (Petty, 2004). Consequently, low teacher expectations can have a negative impact on students' performance. Furthermore, Law et al. (2012) found young Black men acutely aware of the hostile and highly negative racial stereotyping of their community. Stereotyping is discussed more fully in 'Stereotyping and academic achievement' (p.76).

When asked why achievement of ethnic groups differs, three of the responses were not specifically aimed at answering the question and were not ethnicity-specific, but more generally suggested several different factors that teachers felt may contribute to the difference in the achievement of different ethnic groups.

Two teachers suggested that a lack of attention to students' emotional, financial and curricular needs may be a contributing factor in low academic achievement. It was felt to be important to provide excellent student support structures to support students' achievement. One teacher noted that good relationships between staff and students were important in facilitating academic achievement and another suggested that students' poor time management may contribute to low academic performance. Four teachers viewed student motivation as being very important and it was suggested that certain ethnic groups and genders were more motivated than others. Two regarded a lack of parental support and interest as important in contributing to students' poor performance. One suggested that a student's subculture may have a negative influence on their performance. Another considered that social class had the biggest influence on the differences in achievement between different groups.

Many of the issues mentioned were applicable to all ethnicities, however the points made about poor motivation, lack of parental support and student subcultures portray aspects of everyday racism (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017) as discussed in 'Racism as normal' (p.41).

Steele (1997), discussed in 'Stereotyping and academic achievement' (p.77), argued that students may compensate for the negative stereotyping they experience by developing a protective disconnection from the situation.

Additionally, Major et al. (1998) argued that as a coping strategy this can protect an individual's self-esteem from poor outcomes such as underachievement.

Teachers' insights on policy and practice

This section outlines teachers' responses to the questions relating to education policy and practice in the questionnaire. These three questions were intended to discover the teachers' suggestions for actions that could be taken in education policy and practice that may improve African-Caribbean students' achievement.

The literature relating to policy and practice is discussed in the Literature review sections on 'Racism as normal' (p.42) and 'Critical pedagogy and the curriculum' (p.70).

When asked for strategies to improve these students' achievement, the teachers' responses covered several areas. Four highlighted the importance of positive role models that reflected the students' own ethnicity within the learning environment. Three suggested making the learning more interactive and relating it to the students' own experiences. Two suggested making the national curriculum more relevant to students' own culture. One acknowledged the importance of preparing students for higher education by focusing on what is needed to gain access to university. One emphasised the importance of maintaining a motivational learning environment; with high expectations for all students; coupled with a strong disciplined approach, and within a supportive environment which provides interventions before students start to fall behind with their studies. One respondent suggested that African-Caribbean students may develop an anti-establishment mentality, which may be created from their perceptions of racism in the wider society including the police and court system. Leonardo (2002) argued that racism is infused into every aspect of life. This respondent reflected on

students' early years education and suggested that there needs to be greater development of students' academic abilities during this stage of their education.

These responses echoed Ladson-Billings (1995) which outlined principles of good teaching including providing an academically challenging learning environment that meets the needs of all students, which encourages students to be questioning of their world, engenders political awareness, and supports students of differing backgrounds.

When asked how to make teaching more relevant to students from different cultural backgrounds, all teachers agreed that there was a need to deliver an inclusive curriculum that was stimulating, that provided choice, and that reflected all students' culture and background. This was further highlighted by one teacher who suggested that the history curriculum portrays Black culture and history in a negative light, presenting Black people as subordinate for example in the civil rights movement or as victims of slavery. One suggested that immigration could be studied in the national curriculum including why it takes place. Three responses stressed the need for the curriculum to become less westernised and less White British or middle class to encompass a broader range of values and beliefs, and one proposed that a White middle-class bias may result from the teachers' belief in the values and beliefs they hold:

Perhaps teachers often teach from the view that their own beliefs are right and teach based on this.

(Teacher five, Sociology)

One teacher suggested that Black History month should be scrapped, and that its content should become part of the national curriculum instead of being reserved for one month each year.

These comments are consistent with the students' comments which stated that curricula were not sufficiently inclusive or positive about their ethnicity, which suggests structural inequality in these curricula. Milner (2011) explained that students need culturally relevant curricula that seek to reflect the culture, values, customs and beliefs of all. Furthermore, Rios et al. (2010) argued that including a topic in the curriculum highlights its importance, whilst omitting a topic suggests that it has minimal importance or relevance. Banks (2001) noted that curricula often exclude contributions from non-white ethnic groups, and Jones (2016) argued that a student's race was an important aspect of their identity that should not be ignored. Such curricula may engender micro-invalidating of minority students (DeAngelis, 2009).

When asked what influences learners' levels of motivation, three teachers identified the quality of teaching, arguing that good teaching motivated students to become engaged in learning. One noted that it was important for the subject content to be relevant to the students' own lives, and that good teaching and learning involves giving constructive feedback and praise to motivate and encourage the students. Two regarded providing students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning through discussion and debate as essential. Four argued that support was said to be very important in maintaining student's motivation: this took several forms; support and encouragement from home, including from friends and peers, and supportive personal relationships. One emphasised the importance of teachers supporting students, for example teacher encouragement

was said to help students stay focused and hence achieve more. Two teachers felt that when students experienced achievement this motivated them to work harder.

Hence, the teachers seem to understand what can motivate these students, however, the underachievement of African-Caribbean students suggests that these principles are not necessarily being put into everyday practice.

Teachers' expectations

This section outlines teachers' responses to the question in the questionnaire relating to their expectations of students. The question was looking for insight into teacher's expectations of different groups of students, and factors that may influence these.

When asked to consider what affects teachers' expectations for different groups of learners, the responses highlighted several issues. One key issue mentioned by three teachers was that of students' behaviour whether actual or perceived. Behaviour identified as negative included behaviour that was intimidating; for example, one teacher mentioned persistent intimidating behaviour from African-Caribbean boys:

From KS3/4 I have often found African-Caribbean boys the hardest to engage at the start often due to intimidating behaviour, which can still be seen in year 12. Once relationships are built this issue stops. Over time I have more problems with keeping White boys motivated and dedicated; they seem to lack the drive to reach their own goals as the year goes on.
(Teacher one, Art)

Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor (2006), discussed in 'Stereotyping and academic achievement' (p.78), argued that these relationships can be a key factor in students' progression. Another teacher cited examples of behaviour that affected teachers' expectations negatively such as misbehaving in class, missing deadlines for handing in work, and poor attendance. Positive behaviours identified that impacted on teachers' expectations included students' active involvement during the lessons; for example, one respondent noted that teachers' expectations were increased for students that demonstrated independent working, or who asked questions in class. Another teacher noted that teachers' own preconceptions and cultural backgrounds play a part in informing teachers' expectations of different groups of students. One teacher suggested that students' socio-economic background may impact on teachers' expectations of them. Two respondents stated that previous attainment or the disclosure of target minimum grades before a teacher meets a student may impact negatively on that teacher's perceptions of the student's ability to achieve academically, as it is then likely to be based upon past performance at a younger age.

Clearly teachers need to have awareness of the stereotypes they hold, and to try to avoid allowing these stereotypes to influence their treatment of students, to avoid the perpetuation of structural inequality. Critical race methodology (p.88), defined by Solórzano and Yosso (2002), is interested in the intersectionality of race with social class and gender, and one teacher's answer revealed that their experiences of male and female African-Caribbean students differed, viewing female students as more hard-working and better at planning ahead. Furthermore, Strand (2012), discussed in 'The social construct of underachievement' (p.68),

noted the socially unjust practice of placing African-Caribbean students disproportionately in lower exam tiers.

Influences: teachers' ideas and perceptions

There were several different aspects to the final part of the teachers' questionnaire which was intended to question further their perceptions of different ethnic groups of students and the influences on students' motivation and aspirations. The teachers were asked how curricula could be improved, what influence teachers had on students' expectations, and what influence peer groups had on students' achievement.

When asked how students' levels of motivation and aspirations could be improved, of the six participating teachers only four responded. One teacher emphasised the importance of maintaining high expectations of students in their ability to achieve academically, as argued in Hargrove and Seay (2011), and discussed in 'Stereotyping and academic achievement' (p.79). Another highlighted the importance of families in maintaining students' motivation to be organised. A third suggested that use of less achievement data by teachers may reduce pre-judging of students' academic ability by teachers and that students could be put into more mixed ability teaching groups. The fourth teacher suggested that to increase the level of student motivation and aspirations the use of positive role models within the learning environment may inspire students.

When asked how curricula could be improved, four respondents highlighted the importance of an inclusive curriculum that is relevant to students, for example one teacher suggested:

Change the national curriculum and make it less westernised.

(Teacher six, Sociology)

One teacher noted that arts subjects should look for influences from a wide range of ethnicities to provide a more diverse curriculum.

Ladson-Billings (1995), discussed 'Critical pedagogy and the curriculum' (p.73), agreed that it was important to include elements from students' cultures in the curriculum.

When asked if teachers' expectations have an influence on students, of the six participating teachers only three responded. All three teachers acknowledged that teachers' expectations have an influence on students, arguing that this can be extremely significant, in that students can become very aware of teachers' expectations. This was further emphasised in a response from a teacher who noted that students are very sensitive to teachers' expectations, which they often take on board:

[Teachers' expectations have influence and] students get the message quickly.

(Teacher four, Sociology)

Some teachers understand that their expectations can have a strong influence on student performance.

When asked about peer group influence on students, all the participating teachers responded, noting the huge importance of peer group influence, which was said to have the potential for both a positive or a negative influence on students' behaviour and attitude towards education. Teachers suggested that peer groups can be very motivational in galvanising students to become more focused on their studies, with one noting that peer group influence may create a positive or negative group mentality.

Law et al. (2012), discussed in Student attitude and aspirations (p. 69), noted the existence of a White ideology that African-Caribbean students experience anti-school peer pressure, however the students in this study did not list this as a significant influence on them.

Summary

This chapter commenced by presenting the students' responses to the focus group questions viewed through the lens of critical race methodology. Courses studied had been selected most commonly based on subject enjoyment, followed by a subject's relevance to a student's aspirations for the future. In the main, students' friends were said to be supportive of these subject choices. In considering expectations of others, a clear majority of students felt that others expected them to get good grades, particularly their family and friends. Teacher's expectations of students were often seen as negative. Many students aspired to attend university, and most aspired to well-respected careers. Most students had changed these aspirations since they started further education to be more compatible with their subject choices. In considering academic achievement, students considered this a source of pride for their family and friends, but also linked this to a successful life

or career. Family was seen to be the strongest positive influence on this achievement, with distractions such as technology as the strongest negative influence. When discussing topics that acknowledge or value ethnic diversity, very few subjects were said to acknowledge positively or value this diversity, with the notable exception of Art. Curricula were said by students to be extremely Eurocentric.

The chapter then outlined the teachers' responses to their questionnaire. In considering student achievement, teachers highlighted the danger of setting target grades based upon previous attainment. The teachers seemed to be aware that African-Caribbean students were underachieving and provided a variety of hypotheses to explain this. Considering strategies to improve African-Caribbean students' motivation and achievement, teachers suggested a variety of ways in which the curriculum, student support and teaching practice could be improved. A more inclusive curriculum that reflected all students' culture and background was suggested. In considering the influences on teachers' expectations of students, behaviour in class was seen to be important, as well as teachers' own background and prejudices, and students' past performance. Teachers considered that having high expectations of students was important, as was motivation from their families. Students were seen to be very sensitive to teachers' expectations, and students' peer groups may have a powerful positive or negative influence on achievement.

The next chapter relates the data presented in this chapter to the research questions and the knowledge and insights gained from the literature review.

Chapter 6: Data discussion and analysis

Introduction

This chapter discusses the data gathered from both students and teachers and how this data sheds light on the research questions, interpreted within the context of insights from the literature review. This discussion addresses the three research questions in turn: What are the aspirations of students age 16-18, especially in relation to learning, progression and future profession; what factors contributed to their achievement or underachievement at this stage of their education; and how policy and practice in the further education sector could be improved.

This data was viewed through the lens of critical race methodology as outlined by Solórzano and Yosso, 2002) and discussed in Chapter 3: Methodology (p.88) investigating the intersectionality of race with other forms of demographic classification; challenging the dominant white ideology; promoting social justice; acknowledging the significance of the experiential knowledge of marginalised groups; and taking a transdisciplinary perspective that seeks to view racism in both a historical and a contemporary context.

A good definition of social justice in education would be to comply with UNCRC Article 29 (Zaman, 2010, p. 121) to which the British government is committed. This defined certain children's rights in education including respect for a child's culture and the development of a child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

Student academic aspirations

The first research question asked:

What are the aspirations of students age 16-18, especially in relation to learning, progression and future profession?

Utilising critical race methodology (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002) this question aimed to challenge the dominant white ideology. Law et al. (2012) argued that white ideology stereotypes African-Caribbean students as having low academic aspirations, with family values that supports those low aspirations. Additionally, student aspirations may be influenced by micro-invalidation caused by education policy and practice such as Eurocentric curricula (Graham and Robinson, 2004).

Several concepts investigated within the literature review were relevant to student aspirations. It was important to discover and understand the students' perspectives on their motivation and aspirations. Law et al. (2012) argued that there was no link between being male and Black and having low educational aspirations. The data from the students' focus group showed evidence of very positive academic aspirations amongst African-Caribbean students, as can be seen in Figure 10: Students' long-term aspirations (p. 139), challenging the dominant ideology in education that African-Caribbean students have low aspirations (Tomlinson, 2008), for example:

[I aspire] to be a successful accountant / actuary with a good job working in the city.

(Student, focus group A)

Writing about self-belief, DeAngelis (2009) and Sue et al. (2007) highlighted the fact that Black students may need a strong belief in their own ability to achieve highly academically, and that this self-belief may be impacted by environmental factors such as for example micro-invalidation experienced within the education system. This is further supported by NUS research:

The concept of an inferiority complex or self-fulfilling prophecy was frequently cited with many respondents suggesting that it was difficult not to internalise assumptions about their identity, particularly when these had been ingrained from a young age.

(NUS, 2011, p. 54)

The literature presented evidence for a positive student attitude, for example Noguera (2003) who found that Black males exhibited a positive attitude towards education, and Strand (2008) who argued that African-Caribbean male students had a high academic self-concept, contrary to the notion in the dominant white ideology that these students are not interested in education (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002). All the students in this study presented positive self-images when considering their further studies and careers, as was evident in their responses when asked what motivated them (Figure 11: What achievement meant to the students – popular themes, p. 142), for example:

Academic achievement to me means a lot, as I feel as though it'll determine my future, both academically and my successes.

(Student, focus group A)

The data suggested that of the 23 students in this study just one seemed to have internalised the commonplace racist stereotypes held by others regarding his

academic ability to achieve, believing that a teacher had high expectations of him, but this was to achieve only a GCSE grade C. This point was further highlighted by Whiting (2009) who discussed students' internal locus of control, which is an individual's belief that they are responsible for their own success. However, Noguera (2003) suggested that students' attitudes are influenced by teachers' perceptions of their ability. Hence negative teacher perceptions may have a negative impact on student aspirations. However, the 23 students in this study appeared to have high aspirations (Figure 10: Students' long-term aspirations, p. 139). The students' aspirations could be categorised into two main themes: a short-term aim to go to university and to gain a degree, and a longer-term aspiration to join a profession, or to own a business and become wealthy (p. 137).

Of the 23 students 13 had changed their short-term plans to give themselves a better chance of achieving their long-term goals, seven had not and one had become more determined. Only one revealed that they had not yet decided what they wanted to do. Students whose aspirations had changed indicated that this had occurred mainly during the process of applying to university and discovering degree requirements, for example discovering that a mathematics qualification was required to study the degree they were considering:

Need maths A level for physics in university.

(Student, focus group B)

Applying for university had prompted them to pursue courses that would give them the desired outcome of a place at university. Other students had found the subjects they had chosen not enjoyable and changed their university aspirations to others that interested them more, for example:

Changed [my plans] from physics course in university to chemistry course in university.

(Student, focus group B)

There was little evidence in the students' responses that teachers' expectations had impacted on them in any significant way either positively or negatively; or that their aspirations had been dampened down by the internalisation of stereotypes, which may have caused them to believe that they were not capable of pursuing their aspirations. These findings were supported by Steele (1997) and Major et al. (1998) who suggested that a Black student who has experienced negative stereotyping may compensate by developing a protective disconnection from the source of that stereotyping. When discussing the courses that they were studying, students within the study demonstrated a very positive attitude towards their learning and were clear why they had chosen a particular course (Figure 6: Students' reasons for choosing courses studied, p. 129), challenging the dominant white ideology that African-Caribbean students have a poor attitude towards education (Tomlinson, 2008). Figure 6 also indicated that their choice of studies was governed more by their interest and enjoyment of the subject than by their peers:

I've always had a passion for history, and it has always been my favourite subject.

(Student, focus group A)

Some also noted that they chose courses relevant to their university and future career aspirations. Most students agreed that friends on and outside of the course had been very positive about the choices the students had made to study at this

level, with only three indicating that friends showed no interest (Figure 7: What friends thought of the courses studied, p. 132), for example:

They think it's a good choice and that they link very well to what I'd like to choose in university.

(Student, focus group A)

When discussing their friends' opinions on their choice of courses, students indicated that they were not influenced by their friends' views on the courses they were studying, however, in this study, they were often in situations where the friends were doing similar courses and had similar ambitions. In this instance, there seemed to be little evidence that students' aspirations were adversely influenced by the negative attitudes to their race portrayed by some parts of the media and the education system. This data did not contradict the assertion by DeAngelis (2009) and Sue et al. (2007) that Black students need self-belief in their ability to achieve.

Influences on academic achievement

The second research question asked:

What factors contribute to their achievement or underachievement at this stage of their education?

This question sought to challenge ideologies such as blaming the continuing underachievement of Black students on the students themselves (Ladson-Billings, 2007), and the assertion that their families do not value education (Law et al., 2012). Additionally, this question aimed to highlight instances of social injustice where for example teachers' attitudes may have an impact on students' performance. A commitment to social justice is a key element of critical race methodology.

This question sought to identify these factors as viewed from the students' perspective. Concepts from the literature review are used to explore these factors and to investigate how to ensure social justice in providing education for these students. For example, stereotyping of African-Caribbean students, influenced by the long-lasting legacy of colonialism, may be the root cause of certain types of discrimination.

When students were asked about the expectations that other people had of them, 20 of the 23 students revealed that their families had very high expectations and were extremely supportive of their studies and aspirations (Figure 9: Sources of positive and negative expectations - outcome of vote, p. 137), for example:

Family want me to academically do well and be successful.

(Student, focus group A)

This finding was supported by Irizarry (2009) who countered the view that Black families are not interested in their children's academic achievement by arguing that the blame for academic underachievement cannot be attributed to the individual, their families or their communities. Figure 9 showed that students viewed their families as a strong positive influence on their achievement, challenging the dominant white ideology that African-Caribbean families are not interested in their children's education (Law et al., 2012). However, research outcomes from the NUS highlighted a few issues that may inhibit effective support from families. Parental support could be either negative or positive depending upon whether the parents understood the education system or not:

... because our parents never went to university, so there isn't really anyone to guide us or to inform us we are doing the right thing, as our parents do not know.

(NUS, 2011, p. 14)

Figure 9 indicated that friends' expectations were less important than those of their families, although three students noted that friends had positive expectations of them. However, all teachers clearly identified the importance of both immediate and indirect peer group influence and the positive or negative impact it can have on students' attitude to learning and academic achievement.

It's very easy for peer leaders to define what is 'cool' and then change opinions of their friends.

(Sociology teacher four)

Of the 23 students four highlighted the importance of teachers' expectations (p. 135). Students identified certain teachers as having positive expectations of them

academically. These teachers were supportive and very positive, wanting students to do well or very well and achieve high grades such as A*. Students said that some teachers had the same high academic expectations as the students' parents. Furthermore Goldenberg (1992) suggested that if teachers have high expectations for students, they create a more effective learning environment which facilitates academic success. This was supported by Murdock (1999) and Voelkl and Frone (2000) who found that students were sensitive to teachers' perception of their ability and achieved more highly when a teacher believed that they could succeed. This was further supported by a Black Caribbean participant in NUS research:

If your teacher doesn't believe in you from then it is very difficult to then change your mindset as you get older and not feel like everyone is waiting to add you to the failing statistics.

(NUS, 2011, p. 54)

The seven students who stated that their teacher or school had positive expectations also stated that they were well-supported by their families (p. 304).

My family is a big encouragement as well as my teachers who may praise my work, which is a booster.

(Student, focus group A)

However, during voting just one student voted for school as a positive influence on their achievement (Figure 12: Positive influences on students' achievement – outcome of vote, p. 143). Evidence from the student focus group data highlighted the fact that students' families were very supportive of them in their academic studies (Figure 9: Sources of positive and negative expectations - outcome of vote, p. 137).

The importance of an enabling education environment is also supported by Tikly et al. (2006) who highlighted the importance of teachers' attitude towards these students as well as the negative impact of the media portrayal of them as not interested in education. The teachers' responses showed that at least three of them were aware of the DfE data that portrays African-Caribbean students as underachievers (p. 311-312, p. 317). Furthermore, Woolley et al. (2010) and Petty (2004) highlighted the possible impact that stereotypes and internalising others' perceptions may have on students. This study was looking for evidence of teachers' expectations being internalised by students, which could become a significant factor influencing their achievement. It was also investigating the possibility of internalisation of stereotypes by students becoming a lived reality, reinforced by subtle micro-aggressions that suggest to the students that they are not academically able. The data from the student focus groups suggested that students' achievement was influenced by teachers' expectations of them.

My teacher [has] high expectations of me academically.

(Student, focus group A)

This was supported by five of the 23 students who acknowledged the importance to them of teachers' praise and encouragement. However, three students voted for teachers as a negative influence on their achievement and one teacher was said to have been surprised when one of the students achieved more than the teacher had predicted, suggesting everyday racist practices may be in operation. Another student felt that a teacher's expectation for him to achieve a C grade in English language was a high expectation. This may suggest that putting students into foundation level classes, where the highest grade achievable is a C grade, engenders low expectations for the students in those classes. Furthermore,

placing students into foundation level classes may be socially unjust, since students in these classes may not be given the opportunity to develop to their full potential (Zaman, 2010). Other than in this one example, the students provided no evidence that they had internalised negative teacher expectations, however, such negative expectations may be commonplace. This was further demonstrated by a mixed-race participant in NUS research who noted that:

Expectations of ethnic minorities, especially Black students, are considerably lower.

(NUS, 2011, p. 12)

Teachers' responses highlighted several different factors that may improve students' aspirations and levels of motivation, for example:

Help from home: especially with motivation to be organised!

(Art teacher)

The importance of positive teacher expectations was highlighted by Tyler and Boelter (2008) who argued that such expectations are associated with performance gains and that negative expectations resulted in academic difficulty. When discussing how levels of motivation and aspirations could be improved (p. 164), teachers highlighted the importance of having and maintaining high expectations for all students, and the dangers of using data which encouraged teachers to pre-judge students' academic abilities, a practice that may create and perpetuate social injustice. One key factor mentioned by teachers that influenced teachers' expectations was students' previous attainment, which is often used to set target minimum grades (p. 162). A teacher noted that this was normally done before a student meets his or her teacher and that it can strongly influence the

teacher's perception of a student's ability to achieve. Figure 28 (Appendix A, p. 271) highlights the possible dangers of using past academic achievement at 16 to predict future academic achievements, as described in Chapter 1. This was supported by Tyler and Boelter (2008) who argued that a student's past academic achievement influences a teacher's perspective on that student's capability for academic success. Students were aware of expectations set in this way:

Teachers ... say because I got a certain grade (in the past) I can't do something.

(Student, focus group B)

Clearly, such an attitude may have a significant impact on some students' faith in their own ability, which may lead to underperformance. Utilising past grades to determine minimum grades may be detrimental and may have a negative influence on teachers' perception of students' potential ability.

I often think they can achieve more than what the data suggests.

(Sociology teacher five)

Hence, the use of this data to judge students' potential may play a part in creating and perpetuating social injustice in education through structural inequality. The issues surrounding teachers' assessment of African-Caribbean students' academic ability were highlighted by Strand (2012) who argued that these students were systematically under-represented in the entry to the higher exam tiers relative to their White British peers, and that this could unrealistically lower teacher expectations.

When teachers were asked about what influences their expectations of students, three regarded behaviour in class as significant, and two teachers acknowledged that teachers' backgrounds and prejudices may have an impact:

[Teachers] own preconceptions and cultural background [influence their expectations].

(Economics teacher).

One teacher noted that students' past performance was a key influence. Students' behaviour was said by three teachers to influence teachers' expectations, which in turn has an influence on teachers' relationships with them. Another teacher stated that teachers' expectations of students' academic achievement influenced students' achievement, and that teachers' perceived expectations could be instrumental in motivating or demotivating students:

[To improve student motivation teachers should] maintain high expectations.

(Economics teacher).

Such processes in education may perpetuate patterns of underachievement. Petty (2004) argued that teachers' stereotyping, leading to low expectations for students, can lead to the self-fulfilling prophecy of low achievement. Teachers' own cultural and economic background can create preconceptions, for example of students' behaviour and academic ability, creating structural inequality. One teacher reported experiencing intimidating behaviour by African-Caribbean boys which ceased once a relationship had been built up:

From KS3/4 I have often found African-Caribbean boys the hardest to engage at the start often due to intimidating behaviour.

(Teacher one, Art)

This may be evidence of everyday casual racism if white boys' behaviour with a similar disruptive impact went unrecorded or if these white boys were treated less harshly (Connolly, 1995).

Academic achievement was important to all the students (Figure 11: What achievement meant to the students – popular themes, p. 142).

Academic achievement to me means a lot, as I feel as though it'll determine my future, both academically and my successes.

(Student, focus group A)

Students overwhelmingly emphasised the importance of family encouragement and of being self-motivated as key factors contributing to their academic achievement (Figure 12: Positive influences on students' achievement – outcome of vote, p. 143).

Family, because they all have a career and they want me to have my own.

(Student, focus group C)

In support of the evidence from the students, Benskin (1994) and Wright (1987) argued that the factors that were contributing to the unequal attainment of Black children were situated within the educational structures themselves and not the students' family or culture. Teachers held similar views about the meaning of student achievement, for example, success and accomplishment in the long term:

Achieving their 'potential' [is what student achievement means to me]

(Sociology teacher five)

Their responses indicated that achievement could have several outcomes: academic progression, social development and developing and maturing emotional intelligence. Students aimed to achieve their 'potential', the highest they thought they could achieve, but this was influenced by what their teachers and the data suggested they were able to achieve. Therefore, the use of group achievement data and students' previous achievements may have a negative impact on their future academic achievement as teachers may perceive them as academically less able (Hargrove and Seay, 2011).

Woolley and Grogan-Kaylor (2006) found that the teacher-student relationship was the most influential factor in students' achievement, and Tyler and Boelter (2008) and Sanders and Rose-Adams (2014) suggested that teachers' perceptions and expectations may be influenced by students' ethnicity. Possibly because of everyday racism, when asked about the expectations of others, only seven students noted that teachers could be positive, wanting them to do well, or said that they felt encouraged because their work was praised, for example:

Teachers ... high expectations and to go to university.

(Student, focus group A)

Two teachers identified the key role of personal relationships both inside and outside the learning environment as motivating or demotivating influences, including support from home, for example:

A learner's level of motivation changes hugely depending on the person they are sat next to.

(Sociology teacher five)

The impact of the stereotypes of a student that may be held by teachers was highlighted by Woolley et al. (2010) and Petty (2004), who argued that the holding of such stereotypes can lead to teachers lowering their expectations of the student concerned. As argued by Rogers and Way (2016), young people's identities can be linked to other people's social expectations and stereotypes of them. The impact of stereotyping was further highlighted by NUS research (2011) which argued that many of their respondents believed that encountering racial stereotypes and being educationally disadvantaged from an early age meant that they were not prepared academically for further or higher education; and that this was particularly the case for Black-Caribbean students.

Two teachers suggested that social class was a very important factor contributing to students' achievement, indicating that students from poorer backgrounds tended to do less well academically (p. 313). Vincent et al. (2012a), Blunden (2004) and McNamara-Horvat (2003) highlighted the impact of social class, but also noted that middle-class African-Caribbean students tend to achieve less academically than middle-class White students. Similarly, Strand (2011) and Carbado et al. (2013) argued that social class and poverty alone could not explain the achievement gap between African-Caribbean and White British students. This highlights the intersectionality of race and socio-economic status. Furthermore, Gillborn et al. (2012) argued that race had been removed from the discourse within education which instead was focusing on the impact of poverty, and on the achievement of White working-class males.

Four teachers also identified gender issues, for example suggesting that girls tended to achieve more highly. Teachers' responses related the issue of motivation to gender, suggesting that African-Caribbean girls are often more motivated and conscientious, aiming to do well (p. 312, p. 313), evidence of the intersectionality of race and gender.

Boys tend to be more relaxed, leaving work until the last minute and less bothered about doing well.

(Sociology teacher five)

However, the DfE GCSE achievement data (Figure 1, p. 20) showed that African-Caribbean girls still tend to achieve less academically than white British girls. Considering gender differences, Rogers et al. (2015) argued that in a male-dominated culture success is associated with the male gender, but not with Black males. Similarly, Tikly et al. (2006) argued that Black male students may lack belief in their own ability to achieve, possibly due to poor teacher attitude or media portrayal of them as lacking interest in education. These are likely to be consequences of negative stereotyping.

Teachers could state differences in the academic achievement of different ethnic groups of students, providing several possible explanations for these differences. These included students' socio-economic background, gender and ethnicity, for example teachers noted that Black boys, Pakistani and Bangladeshi students tend to underperform, and that Chinese students tend to be higher achievers:

Generally, I would say that Asian students achieve more highly or certainly have high expectations.

(Sociology teacher five)

This view highlights aspects of stereotyping (Petty 2004) and may create structural inequality. Teachers highlighted differences they perceived between different ethnic groups in the level of support and interest from home that their students received (p. 313, p. 316, p. 318). However, students' responses indicated that their families were supportive (Figure 12: Positive influences on students' achievement – outcome of vote, p. 143), for example

My parents encourage me to do well.

(Student, focus group A)

Teachers' explanations of the differing academic achievement across different groups of students covered a range of themes, including students' love of and interest in the subject, the poor organisational skills of students, and poor time management. One suggested that students' subculture, which may be anti-school, may contribute to low academic achievement (p. 313). However, Law et al. (2012) argued that there was no link between being black and having low academic aspirations. 16 students mentioned the importance of self-motivation as a key factor influencing their academic achievement in a positive way (p.304), which Whiting (2009) described as students' internal locus of control, for example:

I tend to motivate myself.

(Student, group A)

Ten students noted that an important negative influence on their academic achievement was the impact of distractions from information technology, and six mentioned poor time management as a significant negative influence on their achievement (p. 306).

Whilst considering influences on the achievement of African-Caribbean students (p. 159), three teachers identified the importance of the quality of teaching and learning, arguing that good teaching motivates students. This encompassed several areas; it needed to be relevant to the students' own lives, within an interactive and safe learning environment, and with time provided for students to reflect on learning. The suggestion that teaching should be relevant to the students' own lives challenges the dominant ideology in English education which provides a largely Eurocentric curriculum (Graham and Robinson, 2004). Success and achievement were identified as powerful motivators by one teacher:

If students are doing well, they are normally more motivated.

(Sociology teacher six)

This was further reinforced in Ladson-Billings (1995) who noted that experience of academic success was one of the key components of culturally relevant pedagogy.

In considering if topics they had studied acknowledged or valued ethnic diversity students were able to distinguish between acknowledgement and valuing. Students' responses clearly indicated that they felt that most of their academic subjects did not acknowledge or value ethnic diversity (Curricula and ethnicity, p. 148), challenging the dominant ideology in education of colour-blind curricula (Catarci, 2014), for example:

Lack of representation especially in English - subjects of books and writers all white.

(Student, focus group A)

One teacher acknowledged that teachers often teach from the viewpoint that their own beliefs are right, suggesting that everyday racism may be in action:

[Teaching could be made more relevant to learners through] a consideration of all values and beliefs rather than just that of the white middle class.

(Sociology teacher five)

In discussing barriers to academic achievement, Whiting (2009) argued that it was important for teachers to become culturally aware, and to be sensitive to the needs of students from other cultural backgrounds. The degree to which different academic disciplines acknowledged or valued ethnic diversity varied. Students noted that the history curriculum acknowledges but does not value ethnic diversity. For example, students wrote that it tends to portray people of Black and mixed ethnicity in positions of subordination, for example in the civil rights movement or oppressed by apartheid and slavery, and never shares the achievements and positive contributions of Black people:

History ... I learned, but it was negative because I felt people judged me because of my race.

(Student, focus group C)

Such history teaching may reinforce the negative racial stereotyping of African-Caribbean people as inferior or subordinate (Graham and Robinson, 2004).

Sociology was said by students to acknowledge ethnic diversity, but to portray Black and mixed ethnic groups in a negative light, for example by giving the impression that minority ethnic groups are comprised of one parent families. In English literature, the students felt that there was a lack of representation of

ethnic minorities in the subject matter and authors studied. In subjects such as health and social care students noted that Black and Asian people are usually portrayed negatively as poor or deprived. Such negative portrayals may reinforce negative racial stereotypes. Art was identified as valuing ethnic diversity, giving students the opportunity to create work that reflects their own identity and culture.

Many curricula were said by students not to acknowledge ethnic diversity. For those subjects that did acknowledge ethnic diversity, for example history and sociology, students felt that non-white ethnicities were often presented in a negative light (p. 148). Such curricula create structural inequality, and may lead Black students to experience micro-invalidations within the learning process, and as Sue et al. (2007) argued this may in effect be experienced as a denial or refutation of the students' racial reality, aiming to replace it with the dominant White reality.

Education policy and practice

The third research question asked:

What are the lessons for policy and practice in the further education and skills sector relating to underachievement?

Critical race methodology (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002) informed this question relating to social justice, which looked for insights into any concealed racism embedded in educational practice. The historical and contemporary context of African-Caribbean students' underachievement is also relevant to critical race methodology.

Critical pedagogy was defined by Howard and Terry (2011) as the application of critical theory to teaching, which seeks to make the curriculum relevant to all student groups. This was further supported by NUS research:

Many Black students surveyed expressed the need for more diverse perspective in their modules, particularly in the areas of history, arts and politics.

(NUS, 2011, p. 29)

Furthermore, Dlamini (2002) and Jennings and Lynn (2005) viewed critical pedagogy as essentially a political process that could be used to develop students' critical thinking and political awareness. Ladson-Billings (1995) noted that critical pedagogy sought to be inclusive for all students and challenged the current situation that put marginalised groups at a disadvantage.

Educational curricula are created based upon the dominant ideology (Rios et al., 2010). Curricula may engender micro-invalidating in minority ethnic groups whose contributions to the subjects such as science, mathematics and literature are excluded, creating an experience of disenfranchisement (DeAngelis, 2009). Additionally, history curricula may engender, reinforce and perpetuate negative stereotypes of races of people. Students in the study felt excluded from the curricula they were studying, and felt that their race was portrayed negatively as subordinate in the history curriculum (Figure 14: Subjects' acknowledgement and valuing of ethnic diversity, p. 149), as recognised by Dlamini (2002) who argued that the education system incorporates subtle and entrenched structural racism:

History ... never states the good things [that] were done by black people.

(Student, focus group B)

Teachers in the study suggested that curricula should be more inclusive and less Eurocentric (p. 164) and Babbitt et al. (2016) argued that such curricula reinforced privilege and ignored racial inequalities.

When asked what factors contributed to their academic achievement, students indicated that most of the curricula studied did not acknowledge them (Figure 15: Students' experience of their ethnicity in the curriculum, p. 154):

Curriculum is extremely Eurocentric; don't see myself represented too much.

(Student, focus group A)

This finding was supported by Banks (2001) who noted that students often must study curricula that exclude contributions from non-white ethnic groups. This was further supported by a Black Caribbean participant in NUS research:

... we are not taught enough about our ethnicity's history, whereas we are taught the UK's history as part of the curriculum, even though we are not all descendants of the UK and therefore don't feel that it relates to us.

(NUS, 2011, p. 13)

Similarly, Jones (2016) stated that a student's race is a significant aspect of their identity that should not be discounted and Rios et al. (2010) argued that leaving a race's contributions out of the curriculum implies that these contributions are of no importance, with possible psychologically damaging outcomes for students of that race. In support of this Yosso (2002) emphasised the importance of gaining a broader understanding of the less visible elements of a curriculum such as process, structure and discourse. A student-centred curriculum takes account of all students' experiences, backgrounds and interests. Yosso further emphasised the

importance of the decisions that are made about what knowledge is presented, how that knowledge is presented both formally and informally, and to whom it is presented. One of several examples given by students of curricula that they felt portrayed them in a negative light was history, which was said never to acknowledge the good things that were done by Black people (p.307).

The concept of colour blindness was defined by Williams (1997) as a denial at worst, and an ideological confusion at best, arguing that a person's colour clearly had a significant impact on how they were treated by others. Similarly, Petty (2004) emphasised the importance of teachers' awareness of students' culture, and teachers' awareness of the stereotypes they hold that certain groups of students may be higher achievers than others. He also argued that it was vital that the curriculum included positive elements from students' ethnic backgrounds and cultures. This point was clearly illustrated by five of the teachers, who noted that the National Curriculum should be more inclusive:

Change the national curriculum and make it less westernised

(Sociology teacher six)

Students also noted that the curriculum was extremely Eurocentric and did not reflect their ethnicity (p. 148). In discussing the cultural relevance of teaching, Coffey (2008) suggested that for teaching to be effective teachers needed to incorporate students' background and knowledge into the planning and delivery of teaching. Additionally, Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that students need to become politically aware of the world in which they live.

The teachers overwhelmingly highlighted the need for a student-centred inclusive curriculum which acknowledged students' diversity, which was less Eurocentric,

and which embraced all students' cultures and backgrounds (p. 315), as also argued by Ladson-Billings (1995):

Provide them with curriculum choice and a curriculum that reflects their culture and background - make it pertinent to them
(Economics teacher)

In line with this, one teacher suggested that Black History Month should be integrated into the national curriculum, and not just be an add-on for one month each year; and that the history curriculum could be less westernised, covering not just the world wars, but perhaps also immigration and why it happened. Teachers emphasised the importance of positive reinforcement, as clearly illustrated by this response from a teacher:

Much of the history curriculum is ... implicitly White British, and any history of Black groups often shows them in a position of subordination, for example, slavery or the civil rights movement. This creates such a negative perception of Black history and culture.

(Teacher six, Sociology)

All the teachers argued that the current curriculum was not inclusive of all students' cultures and values, omitting references to contributions to human knowledge by non-European cultures. The impact of such omissions is not to engender respect for those cultures, contrary to UNCRC Article 29 (Zaman, 2010) and may subject students to micro-invalidations.

For all students to be engaged and not feel marginalised, Tikly et al. (2006) and Milner (2011) argued that it was important that they could own the curriculum and were able to identify themselves within it. For example, four of the teachers stated

that African-Caribbean students needed more positive role models represented within the curriculum in meaningful ways that they could relate to (p. 314).

One teacher suggested that in 'Early Years' (ages 4 - 11 years) education more attention could be paid to students' development. The issues that have been found in the 16-18 curricula are also likely to exist in these earlier years, and student data clearly shows underachievement at age 16 (Strand, 2014; DfE, 2015b). Considering early years education from the ages of 4-11 years old and its impact on African-Caribbean students' academic achievement, Strand (2010) demonstrated how their academic progress diminished over time in relation to other groups of students. He contextualised this underachievement by analysing the impact of different factors such as social class and maternal educational achievement. Strand (2011) argued that none of the factors examined could provide an explanation for the continuing underachievement of African-Caribbean students. He suggested that in-school structural inequalities played a critical role, linked to teachers' attitudes and perceptions of African-Caribbean's students' academic ability. This appears to be the outcome of discriminatory educational practice. Interestingly, one teacher noted that teachers' relationships with students were often influenced by teachers' own preconceptions and cultural background (p. 317).

Teacher assessment of students may perpetuate structural inequality, for example assessments influenced by prejudices and negative stereotypes that teachers may hold. Furthermore, the process by which such judgements are made can be opaque, concealing everyday racist practice (Gillborn, 2010 and Strand, 2012). Students in the study may have experienced such practice as the pre-focus group

questionnaire showed that six of them had been placed in foundation level classes (p. 290). These points are discussed further below.

The practice of using only teacher assessment for predicting students' further achievement at age five was questioned by Gillborn (2010). This point was further highlighted by two teachers who emphasised the danger of using teachers' predictions of students' academic ability based upon achievement statistics or students' previous attainment:

We're given target minimum grades before we've even met the kid. This means that our perception of their ability is already shaped before we teach them.

(Sociology teacher four)

In considering entry to the higher exam tiers Strand (2012) highlighted the structural inequality that African-Caribbean students were systematically under-represented in contrast to White British students, an indication of possible discriminatory practice. This point was supported by the data from the pre-focus group student questionnaire which showed that four of the seven African-Caribbean male students had been entered for foundation tier exams in English and mathematics (p. 288). This involves putting students into streams in which their achievement has an arbitrary limit, in this case a maximum achievable grade of C. Strand (2012) related this practice to racist stereotyping. One teacher indicated that they viewed such streaming as a negative practice, suggesting that mixed ability teaching was of more benefit to students (p. 316). The concept of foundation tier exams appears to be contrary to the aims of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child, which stated that the aim of education is the

development of the child's personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (Zaman, 2010). Figure 4 (p. 40) helps to explain the present-day attitude to African-Caribbean students in education, with the legacy of slavery continuing to have a negative influence on others' expectations of them, and hence their educational experiences.

Teachers suggested several other measures not specifically related to students' ethnicity, but nonetheless relevant to all students' achievement. These measures included better student support structures within the organisation, the need for a social justice imperative that every child matters, an environment of high expectations, more positive reinforcement from teachers, a more strongly disciplined approach to learning and achievement, effective intervention to prevent students from falling behind in their work, and improved communication between parents and the college (p. 313-314).

Summary

This chapter has discussed the data gathered from students and teachers in relation to the literature review and the principles of critical race theory. Teachers and students provided evidence challenging the dominant white British ideology that highlighted discriminatory or socially unjust educational practices, the intersectionality of race and socio-economic status in educational achievement, and curricula that may engender and perpetuate negative racial stereotypes.

Students in the study had high aspirations, but could be influenced by teachers' expectations of them, which were often said to be low. Both teachers and students highlighted the dangers of setting student targets based upon past achievement. The teachers noted that stereotypes can influence teachers'

expectations. Academic achievement was important to all the students, as was their need for their parents to feel proud of this achievement. Teachers and students both noted that good student-teacher relationships can have a positive impact on academic achievement. Teachers noted that African-Caribbean girls tended to achieve more highly. However, they were said to underperform when compared to their white British counterparts. Distractions and poor time management were seen by both students and teachers as having a negative impact on achievement. Teaching quality was said to be important by teachers. Students noted that most of their academic subjects did not acknowledge or value ethnic diversity. Students and teachers found curricula extremely westernised or Eurocentric. Teachers noted the importance of the quality of education at ages 4-11.

The next chapter presents the conclusions of this study, based upon this discussion which related the data gathered to the literature and the research questions.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Introduction

This chapter presents conclusions for the research questions based on the research data, discussion and analysis. The thesis posed three research questions to explore the academic achievement of African-Caribbean Students aged 16-18 years. The first research question considered the aspirations of these African-Caribbean students in relation to their learning and future profession, the second question sought to discover the factors that influence these students' academic achievement, and the final question looked for insights into how education policy and practice could be developed to improve the academic achievement of this group.

The chapter first presents the influences on the academic achievement of the students found during this study, and their educational experiences and aspirations. Findings related to intersectionality and academic achievement are then outlined together with current educational practice and the resultant micro-invalidations of students.

Influences on academic achievement

The research gathered a range of perspectives on achievement including student achievement data, literature relating to race and education, and the opinions, ideas and personal experiences of students and teachers in further education. The research was focused on the educational experiences and outcomes for African-Caribbean students.

Much of the literature on the achievement of students, including African-Caribbean students, for example, Cole (2009), has skirted around the issue of race, looking at other influencing factors such as socio-economic status. However, government student achievement data shows that race continues to have a significant impact on the academic progression of African-Caribbean students. Higher education admissions data for the past five years highlighted the fact that only a small proportion of these students progress into the top third of universities. It seems that many African-Caribbean students have been underachieving academically for many years. Critical race theory proved an effective approach to investigating and unpicking the racism and social injustice that presented itself in the form of African-Caribbean students' academic underachievement.

Figure 16 "Factors influencing the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students viewed through a critical race theory lens" highlights the major influences on the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students that came to light through both the Literature Review and the students' and teachers' responses to the research questions. Subsequently, each individual structural and intrinsic factor is discussed in detail, including the sources of evidence for each influencing factor. The sources of evidence included interpretation of the literature and analysis of the data gathered within the student focus groups and from the teacher questionnaire.

In this figure positive factors intrinsic to African-Caribbean students are shown that may enable them to achieve well academically. However, informed by critical race theory, this thesis has investigated the influence of powerful structural factors that could act to limit these students' academic achievement. The impact of these factors on students of other ethnicities was not researched and so this impact is

not represented in the figure. This figure's horizontal axis represents students' progression through the education system from their entry into primary school through to their admission into university. The vertical axis represents the students' level of achievement as they progress through their education. African-Caribbean students' achievement is represented by the red line and the achievement of other students by the blue line. These lines represent the increasing achievement gap as these students progress through the education system, as documented by Strand (1999) and Bhattacharyya et al, (2003), who demonstrated that the achievement gap between African-Caribbean students and others increased with age.

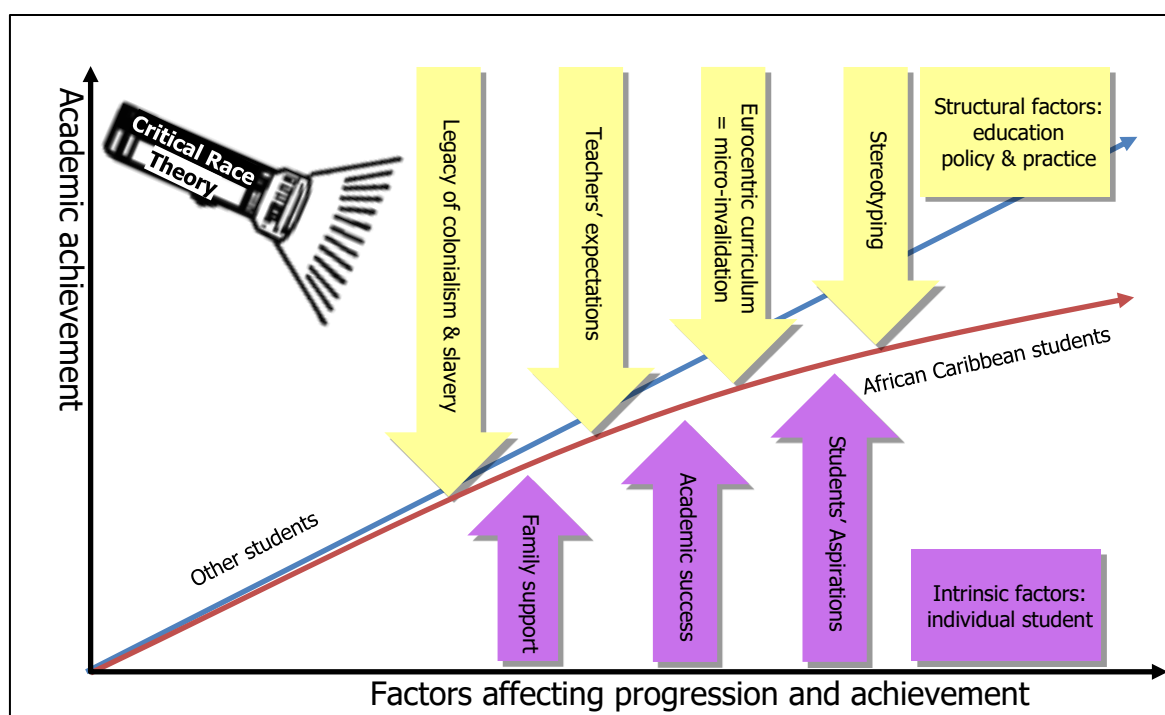


Figure 16: Factors influencing the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students viewed through a critical race theory lens

The figure highlights the factors that this research has identified as having the potential to have a significant impact on African-Caribbean students' academic achievement. The intrinsic factors identified were situated within the student's

immediate environment and included the students' own high academic aspirations and the support provided by their families. However, these intrinsic factors appear to be impacted by significant and often powerful structural factors inherent in current education policy and practice. The structural factors identified relate to a range of discriminatory education policies and practices, for example, the Eurocentric curriculum.

Intrinsic influences on achievement

Figure 16 "Factors influencing the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students viewed through a critical race theory lens" highlights three significant intrinsic influences on achievement that were found to have a positive influence on the achievement of African-Caribbean students, through which the students and their families exercise their agency to make choices and act independently. These influences are discussed in more detail in the next sections.

Family support

Family support was seen by the student participants to be the strongest positive influence on their achievement (Figure 12: Positive influences on students' achievement – outcome of vote, p. 143). Contrary to the dominant ideology that black families are not interested in their children's education (Irizarry, 2009), students overwhelmingly indicated that families had high expectations of them academically, such as achieving good grades and attending university. Making their families proud was important to the students, and they valued encouragement from their fathers and mothers but also siblings and grandparents, for example one student noted:

“My parents encourage me to do well”

(Student, focus group A, p. 143)

Whilst another provided a more detailed insight into the intrinsic nature of encouragement from their parents:

My mother has always made it clear that my qualifications belong to me.

(Student, focus group A, p. 143)

This finding was supported by Benskin (1994) and Wright (1987) who argued that the factors that were contributing to the unequal attainment of Black children were not situated within the students’ family or culture.

Academic success

Academic success was identified as a powerful motivator by two of the teacher participants, one stating:

Grades - if students are doing well they are normally more motivated.

(Teacher 6, Sociology, p. 316)

Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that it is important for students to experience academic success to become motivated, competent and successful learners, developing their academic abilities including literacy, numeracy, use of technology, social and political skills.

Students aspirations

Law et al. (2012) argued that students’ educational and career aspirations were important, that there was no strong link between being Black and having low educational aspirations, and further that these students’ aspirations were as high

as those of other groups. This argument was supported by Strand (2012) who argued that academic outcomes for African-Caribbean students became progressively worse through their school years however, this gap was not present at age four. Tyson (2002) agreed, noting that Black elementary age students began school excited and interested in learning. Many student participants aspired to professional careers, for example solicitor, accountant, actuary, pilot, teacher, radiotherapist, educational psychologist, paediatrician or physiotherapist (p. 133). This demonstrates that these students valued academic achievement as enabling them to have a better life or career in the future, as one student stated:

In the future, I want to complete a four-year history degree, then do a law conversion course to become a solicitor.

(Student, focus group A, p. 138)

Structural influences on achievement

This section discusses the four significant structural influences presented in Figure 16 "Factors influencing the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students viewed through a critical race theory lens". These socio-political factors, identified through a combination of both the literature and the data, highlighted the negative impact of structural inequality on the achievement of African-Caribbean students.

Legacy of colonialism and slavery

Graham and Robinson (2004) argued that the long-lasting legacy of colonialism and slavery forms the foundation of racism in Britain today. This subject is discussed further in Race as a social construct in the literature review (p. 38).

Furthermore, Student and teacher participants in this study argued that history curricula tend to portray Black people in a negative way as oppressed or enslaved (p. 148, p. 159). As one student stated:

History acknowledges but does not value [ethnic diversity].

(Student, focus group A, p. 307)

The literature further argued that this legacy of colonialism and slavery is likely to have influenced the development and use of racial stereotyping, including for example negative stereotypes related to the academic ability of African-Caribbean students (p. 76):

Generally, I would say that Asian students achieve more highly or certainly have high expectations.

(Teacher six, Sociology, p. 157)

The impact of this negative stereotyping is discussed below (p. 207).

Teacher's expectations

The literature argues that stereotyping of students by teachers can have a significant impact on their academic achievement (p. 76). For example, Sanders and Rose-Adams (2014) emphasised the influence of teachers' expectations on student performance and this was further highlighted by Goldenberg (1992) who argued that when teachers had high expectations for students, they created a more effective learning environment. Some student participants wrote that their teachers had not been encouraging, for example:

I don't think teachers encouraged me in the past.

(Student, focus group B, p. 136)

Furthermore, teacher participants highlighted the dangers of teachers setting student targets based upon past academic achievement (p. 164).

We're given target minimum grades before we've even met the kid. This means that our perception of their ability is already shaped before we teach them.

(Teacher four, Sociology, p. 317)

Students in the study stated that they could be influenced by teachers' expectations and this was demonstrated in the outcomes of the focus group votes in which students indicated that they often viewed teachers as not having positive expectations of them, possibly as a consequence of negative racial stereotyping (Figure 9: Sources of positive and negative expectations - outcome of vote, p. 137). Teachers in the study emphasised the importance of having high expectations of their students (p.164):

High expectations - strong disciplined approach [may improve African-Caribbean learners' success].

(Teacher two, Economics, p. 314)

However, this was not the experience of some students in this study (p. 133):

[Expectations] - depends on the teacher.

(Student, focus group A, p. 133)

Eurocentric curriculum = micro-invalidations

The literature suggests that Eurocentric curricula can be a significant source of micro-invalidations for students (DeAngelis, 2009). Student participants stated that their curricula were too Eurocentric, containing few meaningful positive

references to their ethnicity (Figure 14: Subjects' acknowledgement and valuing of ethnic diversity, p. 149):

Lack of representation especially in English - subjects of books and writers all white.

(Student, focus group A, p. 148)

Additionally, teacher participants suggested that the curriculum should be more inclusive to make it more relevant to students from different cultural backgrounds (p. 159), for example:

Provide them with curriculum choice and a curriculum that reflects their culture and background - make it pertinent to them.

(Teacher two, Economics, p. 315)

Projects which are inclusive of all types of cultural backgrounds

(Teacher three, Business & Law, p. 315)

Rios et al. (2010) argued that leaving a race's contributions out of the curriculum implies that these contributions are of no importance (p. 70), and Sue et al. (2007) argued that the impact of such a curriculum on marginalised students could amount to micro-invalidity. This view was also supported by DeAngelis (2009) (p. 41). Several student participants in this study noted the negative way in which Black people were portrayed in topics they were studying:

Sociology – negative ... all ethnic groups live in lone parent families.

(Student, focus group B, p. 148)

Teacher participants also noted the negative way in which Black people were often portrayed (p. 159).

Much of the history curriculum is either implicitly White British or explicitly White British and any history of Black groups often shows them in a position of subordination e.g. slavery, civil rights movement – this creates such a negative perception of Black history and culture.

(Teacher four, Sociology, p. 315)

This was corroborated by Tikly et al. (2006) who noted that students need to own the curriculum, and by Jones (2016), who emphasised the possible negative impact on student's self-worth (p. 70).

The literature argued that Black students may need a strong belief in their ability to achieve academically (p. 69), and that this self-belief may be impacted by environmental factors such as micro-invalidations experienced within the education system (Sue et al., 2007; DeAngelis, 2009).

Students in the study stated that many key curriculum subjects failed to acknowledge the contributions to knowledge made by Black people (Figure 15: Students' experience of their ethnicity in the curriculum, p. 154), for example:

Curriculum is extremely Eurocentric; don't see myself represented too much.

(Student, focus group A, p. 154)

Health and social care – saying that Black people and Asian people are all poor and deprived-bad.

(Student, focus group B, p. 154)

The evidence presented within this thesis shows that the impact of a Eurocentric curriculum was a potential a source of micro-invalidation for these students.

Stereotyping

Petty (2004) argued that teachers' stereotyping, leading to low expectations for certain groups of students, may lead to low achievement of students in those groups. This view is further supported by Rogers and Freiberg (2004). Teachers in this study showed some evidence of stereotyping:

Generally, I would say that Asian students achieve more highly or certainly have high expectations.

(Teacher five, Sociology, p. 312)

Strand (2011) argued that many in the education profession have the misconception that African-Caribbean students have low academic aspirations and low academic ability, and that the impact of negative stereotyping of these students can be seen even in early years education. One of the teachers also highlighted this issue:

I would say there needs to be greater development in early years (either benefits or support - e.g. Sure Start).

(Teacher four, Sociology, p. 314)

Furthermore, another teacher remarked that teachers' own preconceptions and cultural backgrounds can play a part in informing teachers' expectations of different groups of students. This teacher also linked students' expectations and academic achievement to race:

[Learners' achievement is] what teachers and data suggest they are able to achieve. Although I often think they can achieve more than what the data

suggests.

(Teacher five, Sociology, p. 311)

Additionally, student participants noted negative racial stereotypes in the curricula, for example science textbooks were said only to portray Black people in poverty, and the history curriculum was said to portray black people in a negative light:

History ... never states the good things [that] were done by black people.

(Student, focus group B, p. 150)

History ... I learned, but it was negative because I felt people judged me because of my race.

(Student, focus group C, p. 150)

One student stated that he felt that people like him were judged solely on their sports ability. Several students mentioned negative racial stereotypes in the news media, suggesting that it acknowledges ethnic diversity, but in a negative light, for example in the representation of Black communities, or in the reporting of the involvement of Black males in riots or gangs taking part in shootings and stabbings:

Media represent the black community in a negative light.

(Student, focus group B, p. 153)

In the media discussing the riots ... the black males were bad and in gangs.

(Student, focus group C, p. 153)

Awareness of such negative stereotyping can have a negative impact on students, as argued by Law et al. (2012) who documented the acute awareness of young Black men of the highly negative racial stereotyping of their community.

Additionally, Steele (1997) and Major et al. (1998) argued that students experiencing such negative stereotyping may develop a protective disconnection as a coping strategy to protect their self-esteem from poor outcomes (p. 76).

Conclusions relating to the research questions

Students' experiences and aspirations

The first research question explored the aspirations of African-Caribbean students at age 16-18, especially in relation to their learning, progression and future professions.

Students linked academic achievement to success in life, and teachers viewed it as a powerful motivator for students. Evidence from the students' focus groups highlighted the fact that African-Caribbean students have high academic aspirations, contrary to the dominant ideology in education (Law et al., 2012). This finding was supported by Strand (2008). The students' responses clearly indicated that their educational and career aspirations were a key factor in motivating them to continue their studies and demonstrated their interest in pursuing further and higher education as a means of progressing their studies and careers. Most students aspired to getting a well-paid job or a good career. Some students had been forced to change aspirations when applying to university after discovering degree entrance requirements that they were unable to meet due to poor subject choices, perhaps because they had received insufficient advice and guidance at an early enough stage to guide them in accessing higher education.

Intersectionality and students' educational experiences

The second research question explored the factors that contribute to African-Caribbean students' achievement in education at ages 16-18.

The DfE data and Strand's findings (2014) showed that characteristics such as gender, socio-economic status and race can influence a student's academic achievement. In Figure 18 - Figure 20 (p. 261) illustrating Strand's data, the intersectionality between race and gender and race and socio-economic status is evident, but these graphs suggest that the overriding influence on academic achievement for African-Caribbean students is their race, with socio-economic status a less significant influence, suggesting that an African-Caribbean student's social capital as defined by Bourdieu (1977) may be of less value than that of a White student.

Student participants were selected for this study based upon their race, and their socio-economic status was not recorded, as can be seen in the student profiles (p. 113). Hence, it was not possible to investigate the influence of socio-economic status using data from the focus groups. When the teachers were asked about the influences on student achievement both race and socio-economic status were cited:

... White British and Black African and students from central Asia backgrounds tend to perform well on test and exams ... but ultimately, I'd say class is by far the biggest reason for the differences in achievement.
(Teacher four, Sociology, p. 312-313)

However, their comments did not address directly the issue that for an African-Caribbean student with a high socio-economic status, their race becomes a significant factor in their underachievement (Strand 2014).

Within education everyday subtle racism may influence students' academic achievement through the action of structural factors extrinsic to the student. The social construct of underachievement (p. 64) cited both intrinsic and structural factors as contributing to the achievement of African-Caribbean students. The intrinsic factors cited included negative racial stereotypes such as perceived low intellectual ability and students' or families' lack of interest in education, for example 'scientific racism' (Runia, 2015). However, evidence in the literature (Gillborn, 2010, p. 45) has refuted such theories and researchers have started to investigate discriminatory structural factors within the education process that may create and perpetuate underachievement. Examples of these structural factors from the literature include education policies that focus on improving the achievement of working-class White British boys (Gillborn et al., 2012), teachers' attitudes towards students from minority groups (Tikly et al., 2006) and the over-representation of African-Caribbean students in entry to lower tier examinations (Strand, 2012).

The positive influence on achievement most frequently mentioned by the students in the study was that of their parents. Students' responses overwhelmingly indicated that their families had a strong positive influence on their achievement, were supportive of them in undertaking their studies and supported them in both short and long-term academic and career ambitions.

Family [have high expectations of me] – they expect me to achieve my predicted grades or even higher.

(Student, focus group A, p. 135)

Family want me to academically do well and be successful.

(Student, focus group A, p. 135)

This finding was supported in the literature (p. 36) by Irizarry (2009) who argued that Black student underachievement could not be attributed to students' families. Instead, academic achievement was found to be a source of pride for students' parents. Data from this study supported other studies (Benskin, 1994; Wright, 1987) that argued that Black students' underachievement was not influenced by their families' attitudes to education but by structural factors within the educational system itself (p. 65).

As evidence of such structural factors, subtle everyday racism may be seen in teachers' behaviour which may be influenced by the stereotypes they hold of the students, likely to be based upon the legacy of colonialism and slavery (Graham and Robinson, 2004). Additionally, students can be very sensitive to teachers' expectations, as noted by Murdock (1999), with both students and teachers in this study seeing positive student-teacher relationships as critical:

Teachers [influence learners' levels of motivation] - if your teacher encourages you [it] helps you [be] focused [and] more likely to achieve.

(Teacher six, Sociology, p. 316)

Where teachers had different cultural backgrounds from their students, this could have a detrimental impact on this relationship, as argued by Law et al. (2012). In support of this, this study showed that negative racial stereotypes held by

teachers could influence teachers' expectations for students, within this study students noting that teachers often do not have high ambitions for them. One of the teachers reinforced this point by writing that teaching approaches may be influenced by the teacher's own preconceptions and cultural background:

Perhaps teachers often teach from the view that their own beliefs are right and teach based on this.

(Teacher five, Sociology, p. 160)

Additionally, teachers in the study acknowledged the importance of the quality of teaching and its impact on students' motivation and achievement.

Another important negative influence on academic achievement mentioned by students in the study was the difficulty they had in planning and managing their study time, and in minimising the impact of distractions such as computers and mobile phones. However, these disruptive influences may be something all students experience to a lesser or greater extent.

Micro-invalidating in education policy and practice

The final research question explored the lessons learned for policy and practice in the further education and skills sector relating to the underachievement of African-Caribbean students.

In the literature discussing English education policy (p. 58) both Gillborn (2005) and Tomlinson (2008) argued that government policy appears to have failed consistently to confront discriminatory structural issues that may have impacted on the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students. Over the last 40 years, English education policy relating to ethnic minorities appears to have

focussed on assimilation and integration into English society, with a focus on marginal short-term fixes. Additionally, Black students and their families tended to be blamed for poor academic achievement (Ladson-Billings, 2007). Colour-blind education policies were tried in the 1980s and 1990s, and more recently policy has focussed on attainment for all ethnic groups. The government has committed to the UNCRC Article 29 - Aims of Education 1 which advocates respect for a child's cultural identity, and the development of each child to their fullest potential. Initiatives to improve academic achievement for African-Caribbean students have had some limited success; however, this limited improvement has not changed these students' position at the bottom of the tables. Attempts to address this underachievement appeared not to have been a priority, and so remained on the sidelines of education policy (Gillborn, 2005).

The literature argues that a colour-blind approach to education policy is discriminatory (p. 41), and reinforces White privilege (Hooks and Miskovic, 2011). Consequently, a Black student's experience of a colour-blind approach to education can become one of disenfranchisement (Sue et al. 2007), with students experiencing regular damaging micro-invalidations (Sue and Constantine 2007). Such unjust policies seem to be contrary to the UNCRC Article 29 - Aims of Education 1, outlined in the discussion on English education policy (p. 58), which stated that education policy and practice should respect a student's cultural identity and values (Zaman, 2010), and should have no place in education policy and practice that service a diverse student population.

The literature on curricula (p. 70) argue that Eurocentric curricula, one consequence of a colour-blind approach to education, can make African-Caribbean students feel marginalised (Tikly et al., 2006). Both students and teachers stated

that the present curriculum was too westernised or Eurocentric and showed a significant disregard for students of non-White ethnicities. For example, students stated that many subjects did not acknowledge ethnic diversity in a positive manner; teachers suggested that the present curriculum should be made more inclusive; and both highlighted the inadequacy of Black History Month:

Black history month tries to [reflect my ethnicity], but I feel it's a bit superficial. We should learn it whenever applicable with no discrimination, rather than a half-hearted attempt one month a year.

(Student group A, p. 309)

Should scrap Black History month and make it current in national curriculum so do not need to reserve one month a year.

(Teacher six, Sociology, p. 315)

Additionally, teachers appeared to have misconceptions concerning the academic abilities of students from minority ethnic groups and working-class students. Teachers' responses included perceptions about the achievement and self-motivation of these ethnic groups and believed that social class was the main influence on achievement. However, the literature showed intersectionality between race and socio-economic status, with race having a large negative influence on the achievement of African-Caribbean students with high socio-economic status. This can be seen clearly in Figure 20 (Appendix A, p. 263) which shows that Black Caribbean students with high socio-economic status have a mean normal score 0.4 lower than their White British counterparts at age 16.

Previous research into further education (p. 61) found that African-Caribbean students were systematically under-represented in entry to the higher GCSE exam

tiers (Strand, 2012). This discriminatory and unjust selection practice may prevent students from reaching their full potential, contrary to UNCRC Article 29 - Aims of Education 1 (Zaman, 2010). Several African-Caribbean students in the study were found to have been placed on foundation-level GCSE courses, as can be seen in the data collected by the pre-focus group student questionnaire (p. 290).

Importantly, DfE data showed that past exam results may not be an accurate basis for future predictions (Figure 28, Appendix A, p. 271). Teachers and students both noted that teachers are encouraged to use prior academic achievement to predict future achievement, which often occurs before the teacher has met the student:

We're given target minimum grades before we've even met the kid. This means that our perception of their ability is already shaped before we teach them.

(Teacher four, Sociology, p. 317)

This potentially unjust practice of judging students on their past academic achievement could be particularly damaging to African-Caribbean students aged 16-18 due to their lower levels of academic attainment at age 16. The literature (p. 76) argued that such practices may lead a teacher to lower their expectations for the student concerned (Woolley et al., 2010) and can make students feel that they lack the ability to achieve well academically (Murdock, 1999; Voelkl and Frone, 2000).

The literature discussing academic achievement of minorities in England (p. 64) argued that discrimination becomes apparent in Early Years education at ages 4-11, highlighted by Strand (2012) who argued that in the early years, negative

racial stereotyping in teacher assessment of African-Caribbean students may have a profound and excessive impact on those students' future academic achievement. Gillborn (2010) also questioned the practice of using teacher assessment at age five to predict future academic achievement. One teacher in this study suggested that the early years of education can be fundamental to students' success. These first steps of the journey into education are critical, and African-Caribbean children are capable of high academic achievement when provided with inspirational teaching and teachers.

Summary

This research found that race continues to have a significant impact on the academic progression of African-Caribbean students, who have shown low progression into the top third of universities. A critical race theory approach revealed strong structural factors that appeared to limit African-Caribbean students' academic achievement. It appears that the British legacy of colonialism and slavery forms the foundation for racist negative stereotypes of African-Caribbean students in English education today (Graham and Robinson, 2004).

African-Caribbean students in further education within this study were found to have high aspirations. However, some students had chosen subjects incompatible with their university ambitions. The intersectionality between race and social class in the underachievement of these students was evident from data (Strand, 2014) which highlighted that for students of high socio-economic status, race appeared to have a much greater impact on their academic achievement and progression than their socio-economic status. This underachievement occurs despite support and encouragement from students' families (Wright, 1987). Subtle everyday

racism may influence students' academic achievement via structural factors such as the negative racial stereotypes held by teachers and others, and the Eurocentric curricula studied, which contain little acknowledgement or valuing of non-white cultures.

Discriminatory English education policy appears to have failed consistently to confront these structural factors limiting African-Caribbean students' achievement, such as colour-blind education policies, Eurocentric curricula, injustice in the selection of students for exam entry, the use of past achievement to forecast future potential, and negative racial stereotyping in early years education. This education practice appears to inhibit African-Caribbean students from reaching their full potential, and fails to respect students' cultural identity and values, both contrary to UNCRC Article 29 - Aims of Education 1 to which the government has committed.

Chapter 8: Subjective positioning

Introduction

In this chapter I reflect on my research journey, including my motivations in undertaking this study, developing an understanding of critical race theory, and my adoption and adaptation of the Metaplan focus group technique for data capture.

My motivations

The underachievement of African Caribbean students in both my generation and my children's generation is an issue I have always been aware of. My community had been invited to make its home in Britain with the promise of better opportunities for us and our children. However, this academic underachievement appeared to continue unchallenged as if acceptable and normal.

My critical awareness of the issues surrounding the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students developed whilst studying for a master's in education management, which enabled me to question why so many of these young people were not achieving as highly as others within the English education system. As a head of school in a college I had noted that African-Caribbean students were not getting onto BTEC courses because they were not getting the required grades at GCSE. Subsequently, as an education inspector and a member of an equality working group, I learned how government policy damped down achievement expectations for African-Caribbean students. For example, academic achievement targets for African-Caribbean students were set lower than the targets for white students. These targets were based upon the average achievement of African-

Caribbean students nationally. However, based on my own personal, educational and professional experience I believed that in a fair society national academic achievement targets should not be affected by a students' ethnicity.

Critical race theory

It was not until Doctorial level study that I became aware of critical race theory, and on exploring it further found that it offered me a valuable framework and insights within which to explore the questions that had arisen through my previous personal and professional experience of the issues surrounding African-Caribbean student academic achievement. In particular, as a critical theory, it appealed to me in its aim to provide insights into structural inequality based upon race, as opposed to analyses based upon social class or poverty. Its American origins in critical legal studies meant that it has made a slow transition into the relatively under-researched field of further education in Britain.

The complexity of critical race theory was an interesting but a challenging learning journey for me, despite my own first-hand experience of racism. My journey with critical race theory became more meaningful as I started to link my own lived experiences to its tenets - critical race theory provided the language to describe the processes of discrimination and repression that I and other African-Caribbean people experienced. African-Caribbean students from high socio-economic status were not achieving as highly as their white peers, and it seemed to me that class and poverty alone could not explain this situation. Critical race theory provided the means to investigate the powerful influence of certain structures in society including the education system that perpetuate subtle and covert racial discrimination. In the process I developed a more in-depth understanding of how

legacies of the past such as transatlantic slavery and colonialism continue to play a subtle but powerful role within British society and particularly within education.

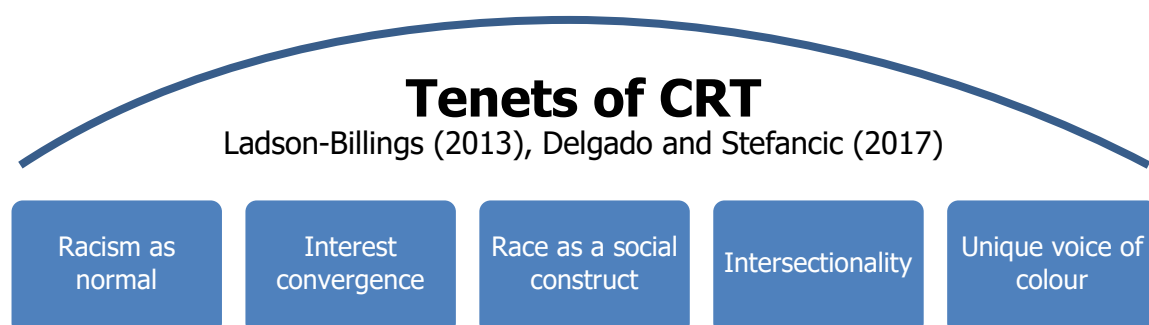


Figure 17: Tenets of critical race theory

The tenets of critical race theory (Figure 17) were not all directly applicable to this research; however, all informed my approach. The tenets 'race as a social construct' and 'racism as normal' were not challenging for me to understand as they related directly to my lived experiences both in my professional and private life. Racism as normal was the world that I was born into and grew up in, I had known no different: it was the silent undercurrent of the society I lived in. While I have always questioned it and endeavoured to break the constraints of 'race as a social construct' that assigned certain traits to particular groups. On reflection, to 'survive' personally and professionally I had to learn the dominant rules.

The tenet of 'interest convergence' was not used directly within this research. This is the argument that policy initiatives which on the surface appear to aim to treat minorities more justly usually provide an equal or greater benefit to the white majority (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017).

The tenet of the intersectionality of race, gender and social class, resonated with my own personal and professional experiences and provided me with valuable

insight into how a person's attributes can interplay to create advantages and disadvantages, for example why middle-class African-Caribbean students do less well than middle-class White students. This brought into focus my own experience of the variety of stereotypes applied to me, based upon combinations of attributes such as my race, class and gender, operating at different times and requiring different forms of navigation, and depending upon the particular context I found myself in such as work, family or social situations.

The tenet of the 'unique voice of colour' helped me to understand that as a black researcher I have a voice with a unique perspective competent to write about race and racism. Moreover, this tenet inspired me to capture the experiences and ideas of the student participants directly. It had meaning, in that it helped me to understand why it was so important for this group's voice to be heard and understood, as a voice different from that of the majority. There was a different story to be told and comprehended, and not through the lens of social class or poverty. As a researcher I did not intend to produce critical race theory counter-stories on behalf of the student participants, but rather my aim was to record and analyse the collective voice of the student participants whilst within their peer group.

The challenge for me in this critical race theory informed research was to find everyday language that could be used to interpret and explain the research findings, moving from the conceptual framework of critical race theory to the everyday lived experiences of African-Caribbean students. For example, I found the tenet 'racism as normal' not particularly useful as a tool for data analysis, unlike the terms 'racial stereotype' and 'racial micro-aggression' which make acts of racism tangible. Counter-storytelling was a challenging technique to master for

a researcher new to this field. Additionally, racial stereotyping seems not to be explicitly analysed through critical race theory but can be related to the tenets of everyday racism and intersectionality. Furthermore, although not a tenet of critical race theory, the concept of racial micro-aggressions connected with my experience both professional and personal. This concept proved useful in my understanding of how curricula could discriminate against African-Caribbean students through micro-invalidating. This made conscious my understanding of an aspect of hidden discrimination that invalidates and devalues the contributions of different groups.

Methodology

I encountered Metaplan at the Open University's conference introducing Doctoral study, where it was presented as an innovative alternative qualitative method to involve participants actively in the research process. My own research needed a method that could record the thoughts and ideas of a disempowered and marginalised student group directly. Metaplan provided the means to record accurately these thoughts and ideas in an inclusive manner, and through prioritising and voting the students were able to participate in the analysis of the data captured. Using the Metaplan method I was able to capture some of the key aspects of this marginalised group's experience of education.

The modified Metaplan focus group technique I employed proved to be a unique, innovative approach to recording the collective voice and experiences of this difficult to reach student group. The technique was able to record both the individual and collective opinions of the participants. Hence it was possible to capture both the majority viewpoints and any divergent individual viewpoints.

However, it must be noted that this variant of Metaplan is not without its drawbacks, for example it is unable to record the source of each contribution, as discussed in Data collection methods, p.101.

Summary

Reflecting on the research process, I found critical race theory to be an effective lens for exploring and understanding the mechanisms of racial discrimination that may have an impact on the academic achievement of African-Caribbean students. However, certain aspects of critical race theory were challenging to master requiring careful interpretation and application, such as counter-storytelling. Metaplan techniques were found to be effective for recording the collective voice of the participants without identifying the source of individual comments. In conclusion, this study provided an insight into this complex aspect of education provision highlighting how English education policy and practice may place minority students at a disadvantage. It is hoped that this thesis provides a distinct contribution and insight into positive ways forward for achieving greater race equality within the education system.

Chapter 9: Recommendations

Introduction

Based upon the conclusions of this small-scale case study, this chapter outlines recommendations concerning education policy, education practice, methodology and further research. Teacher education is discussed, followed by curriculum change, student support for progression, government data collection, and the use of critical race theory and Metaplan.

Policy on teacher education

In exploring students' educational experiences, this study found a lack of understanding of African-Caribbean students by some teachers, highlighting the possibility of negative racial stereotyping (p. 210). Some teacher participants showed evidence of holding negative stereotypes of these students:

I have often found African-Caribbean boys the hardest to engage at the start often due to intimidating behaviour, which can still be seen in year 12. Once relationships are built this issue stops.

(Teacher one, Art, p. 317)

Strand (2012) argued that African-Caribbean students were being systematically under-represented relative to their White British peers in entry to the higher GCSE exam tiers and suggested that this could be a symptom of unrealistically low teacher expectations. Teacher expectations, student assessments, achievement targets and entry into GCSE exam tiers should not be influenced by the

stereotypes that teachers hold. As a black Caribbean respondent in a survey by the National Union of Students stated:

If your teacher doesn't believe in you from then it is very difficult to then change your mindset as you get older and not feel like everyone is waiting to add you to the failing statistics.

(NUS, 2011, p.54)

Similarly, Law et al. (2012) described young Black men and their communities experiencing hostile and highly negative racial stereotyping, and moreover noted their acute awareness of that stereotyping.

The conclusions of this small-scale study suggest that teacher training and continuing professional development programmes could be more effective in developing teachers' understanding and appreciation of all students' cultures, values and belief systems, providing them with tools to help them build empathetic relationships with students with backgrounds different from their own. Teachers could be trained to become more aware of the stereotypes they may hold and be taught techniques to minimise the impact of these on students, as recommended by Petty (2004). Strand (2011) noted that many in the education profession have the misconception that African-Caribbean students have low academic aspirations, and Strand (2014) showed that the impact of this negative stereotyping can also be seen in the outcomes of African-Caribbean students' early years education.

Curriculum change and micro-invalidations in practice

English education policy and practice through its Eurocentric curricula may impose damaging micro-invalidations on African-Caribbean students in further education (p. 204). Hence, it is suggested that the education sector should give serious consideration to the needs of its multi-ethnic student body when developing education policy and practice. Teacher participants in this study recognised the importance of an inclusive curriculum, stating that the present national curriculum was too westernised and needed to be more inclusive:

Change the national curriculum and make it less westernised.

(Teacher six, Sociology)

Student participants found very few positive acknowledgements of ethnic diversity in their curricula:

Curriculum is extremely Eurocentric; don't see myself represented too much.

(Student, focus group A)

Such Eurocentric curricula may contradict the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child, Article 29 (Zaman, 2010, p. 121), to which the government has stated its commitment. The education sector should be more inclusive of all students when developing curricula, recognising the diversity of human experiences as argued by Ladson-Billings (1995) and Ocloo (2002) who made the case for such inclusive curricula. Colour-blind education policies in combination with Eurocentric curricula may reinforce White privilege and discriminate against minority ethnicities, as argued in Graham and Robinson (2004). Therefore,

government education policy should develop guidelines to ensure that all curricula are inclusive and empowering, creating a sense of belonging and empowerment for all students. Tikly et al. (2006) likewise supported the view that it was important for all students to feel such a sense of belonging. Such inclusive curricula may help to avoid exposing African-Caribbean students to damaging micro-invalidations with a consequential negative impact on their academic achievement (Sue and Constantine, 2007). The UK National Union of Students recognised this issue:

Many Black students surveyed expressed the need for more diverse perspectives in their modules, particularly in the areas of history, art and politics.

(NUS, 2011, p. 29)

Student support for progression

This thesis found evidence that students had received insufficient advice and guidance to guide them in accessing higher education (p. 209). Therefore, it is suggested that the education sector including schools and further education colleges should provide additional support to students in their secondary schooling and further education, including ensuring that they receive effective study skills training and effective advice and guidance at an early stage to help them access Higher Education. Students within this study often had to change their university aspirations having chosen a poor combination of subjects at GCSE and in further education (p. 133). These students have support from home, however, additional specialist advice is required when considering future career and course

requirements. This has been argued by NUS research, which suggested the importance of:

... the development of academic skill, such as study skills, in preparation for further and higher education.

(NUS, 2011, p. 17)

Students' achievement and progression data

The academic achievement and student progression data published by the Department for Education (DfE) lacked important detail in some areas (p. 260). Hence it is suggested that the DfE should provide an additional data set for level 3 using a higher level 3 achievement measure such as the proportion of students achieving A level grades sufficient for entry into the top third of universities. Additionally, the published DfE 'destinations' data should provide a more detailed breakdown of pupil characteristics by race, as well as socio-economic status, allowing more detailed analysis of the impact of these characteristics, and the tracking of destinations at key stage 4 and key stage 5 for African-Caribbean students and other minority ethnicities.

Furthermore, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) breakdown of university admissions by student characteristics did not use the same measures as the DfE data (p. 273). Hence, it is suggested that HESA collect and publish more detailed HEIDI admissions data that records students' eligibility for free school meals and uses the same ethnicity categories as the DfE.

Critical race theory

I would recommend researchers in education to evaluate critical race theory as an effective tool to investigate inequality, for example to investigate everyday racism in society's structures such as education policy and practice (p. 41). Its interest convergence thesis may help to understand how and why policies promoting racial equality are introduced (p. 47). Additionally, when studying for example the impact of race or class on marginalised groups, it is likely to be important to consider the intersectionality of these attributes with others such as gender, as discussed in Intersectionality and anti-essentialism (p. 47). Some critical race theory scholars use the more contentious tool of counter-storytelling (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002, p. 32) to communicate their ideas and findings, but critics argue that this technique is easy to misuse (Ladson-Billings, 2013). I found that counter-storytelling requires compatible data collection methods to be effective. The Metaplan technique employed in this study was not compatible with producing critical race theory counter-stories for the reasons discussed in the next section. One-to-one interviewing is one technique that is often used to capture data for counter-storytelling. Interviewing is discussed in the data collection methods section on page 95.

Metaplan techniques

For research in education, the Metaplan technique can be an effective qualitative data collection method for working with groups of young people, since it encourages active participation of the whole group in the data capture process and can generate rich data. Metaplan provides an inclusive managed environment with the ability to capture participants' voices and form a group voice. However, it

has limitations within a qualitative research environment. For example, the Metaplan variant employed within this research does not record the source of each response and so prevents the use of pseudonyms to group together the responses of each research participant. Furthermore, notes are not taken during the group discussions and so these cannot be analysed. Also, it is not possible to follow up on participants' written responses for further exploration. These limitations make it difficult to produce critical race theory counter-stories using Metaplan.

Recommendations for further research

The underachievement of African-Caribbean students remains an important issue for future research. Five important areas for this research are outlined below.

Further research exploring the intersectionality between race, socio-economic status and education with a focus on students aged 16 to 19 years would enable a better understanding of the interplay between these factors, using critical race theory and critical pedagogy to examine these issues during different stages of the education system. This could involve active participation of diverse student groups, contributing to the debate on education and curriculum development.

Literature highlights the contribution and importance of a positive academic self-identity for high academic achievement, and that some African-Caribbean students may not have such a positive academic self-identity (p. 80). Focus groups, with African-Caribbean students, parents and teachers at Key stage 2 and 3 could be used to explore the question "How can African-Caribbean students be helped to develop positive academic self-identities?"

Negative stereotyping of African-Caribbean students may have a long-term impact on these students' self-schemas relating to their academic ability (Rios et al., 2010). Separate focus groups of African-Caribbean students aged 14 to 16, their parents and their teachers could be asked to reflect on their experiences of the education system with a focus on the impact of negative stereotyping on African-Caribbean students.

Curriculum transformation is complex with competing and contradictory understandings of what knowledge is presented and valued. Further research on the representation of race in the curriculum and evidence of micro-invalidations within and across different disciplines is needed, together with research into the possibilities for transformation of curricula to reflect better the diversity of students and their cultural experiences (p. 70).

Further research into the reasons for the lack of African-Caribbean and other ethnic minority teachers in education is needed, including investigating the impact of this on the educational experiences of students from minority groups. Ocloo (2002) highlighted the under-representation of black staff in further education at all levels from teachers to managerial positions and suggested that the government could do more to encourage African-Caribbean graduates to enter the teaching profession.

Summary

These recommendations are drawn from my own ontology, existing quantitative data from the DfE and HEIDI database, literature critically reviewed, and qualitative data gathered from a small-scale case study of African-Caribbean students in further education including a small sample of their teachers.

Recommendations covered six areas: teacher education to equip teachers to be more effective with a multi-ethnic student body; curriculum change to provide a more inclusive empowering learning experience; more effective advice and guidance to prepare students better for further studies and progression; improved student data collection and analysis; the use of critical race theory in educational research; and the use of Metaplan techniques with young people in qualitative educational research.

Suggestions for further research into the underachievement of African-Caribbean students included an investigation into their academic self-identity; a study of possible measures to limit the impact of negative stereotyping on these students; a study into how curricula could be changed to reflect student diversity more effectively; and research into the reasons for the lack of African-Caribbean and ethnic minority teachers within the education system.

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Appendix A: Academic achievement data

In the following figures, 'eFSM' denotes students eligible to receive free school meals, used here as a proxy for socio-economic disadvantage. Recent research highlighted that it is a crude measure but provided some reassurance on its use:

It is certainly the case that whilst the eFSM measure may not capture everyone from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds it is nevertheless a good measure of identifying only children living in socio-economically disadvantaged households.

(Taylor, 2017, p. 19)

However, figures for students not receiving school meals, provided as part of the DfE data set, are not useful for assessing the achievement of students from households of higher socio-economic status:

It is certainly not the case that non-eFSM equates to 'middle class' in a sense that would be widely understood.

(Gillborn and Rollock, 2010, p. 162)

Hence, in this section the attainment percentages of students eligible for free school meals (eFSM) are compared with those of all students (ALL).

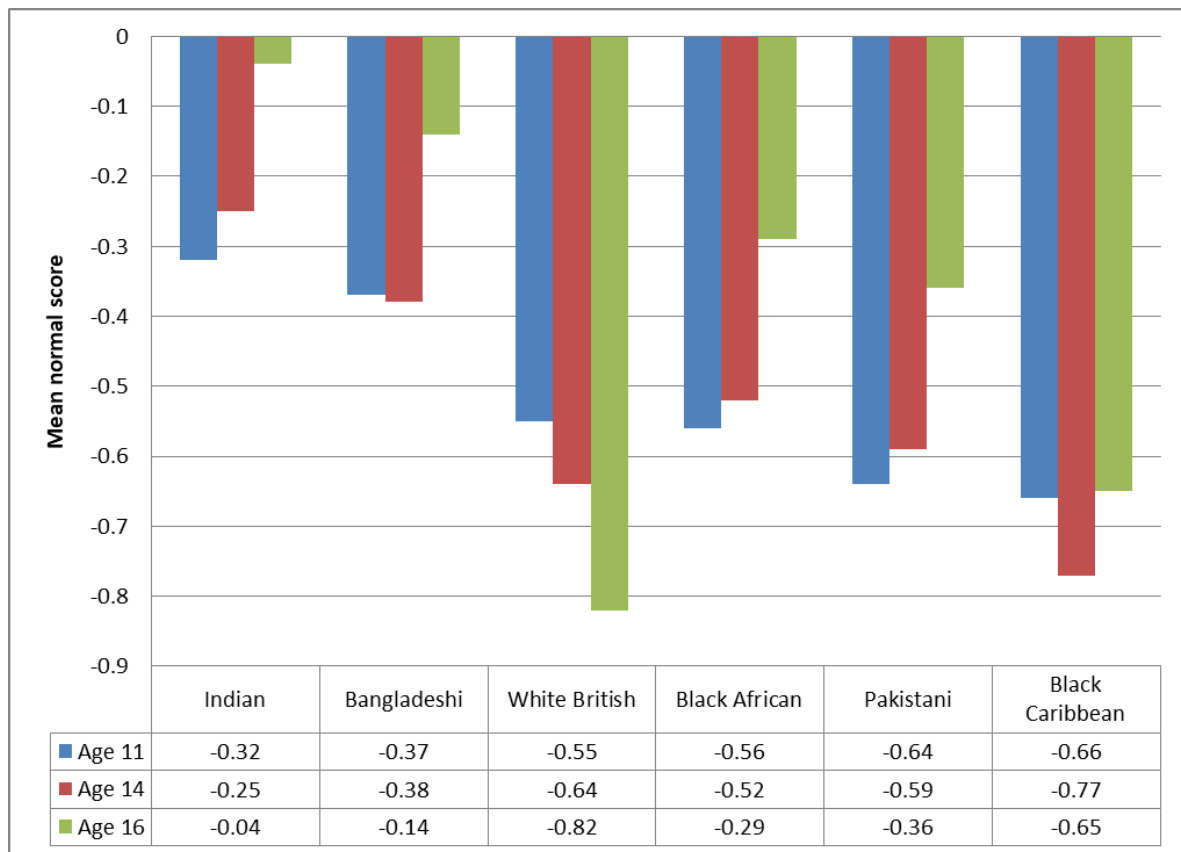


Figure 18: Achievement at ages 11, 14 and 16, SES bottom quintile

Adapted from Strand (2014), "Ethnicity, gender, social class and achievement gaps at age 16: Intersectionality and 'getting it' for the white working class"

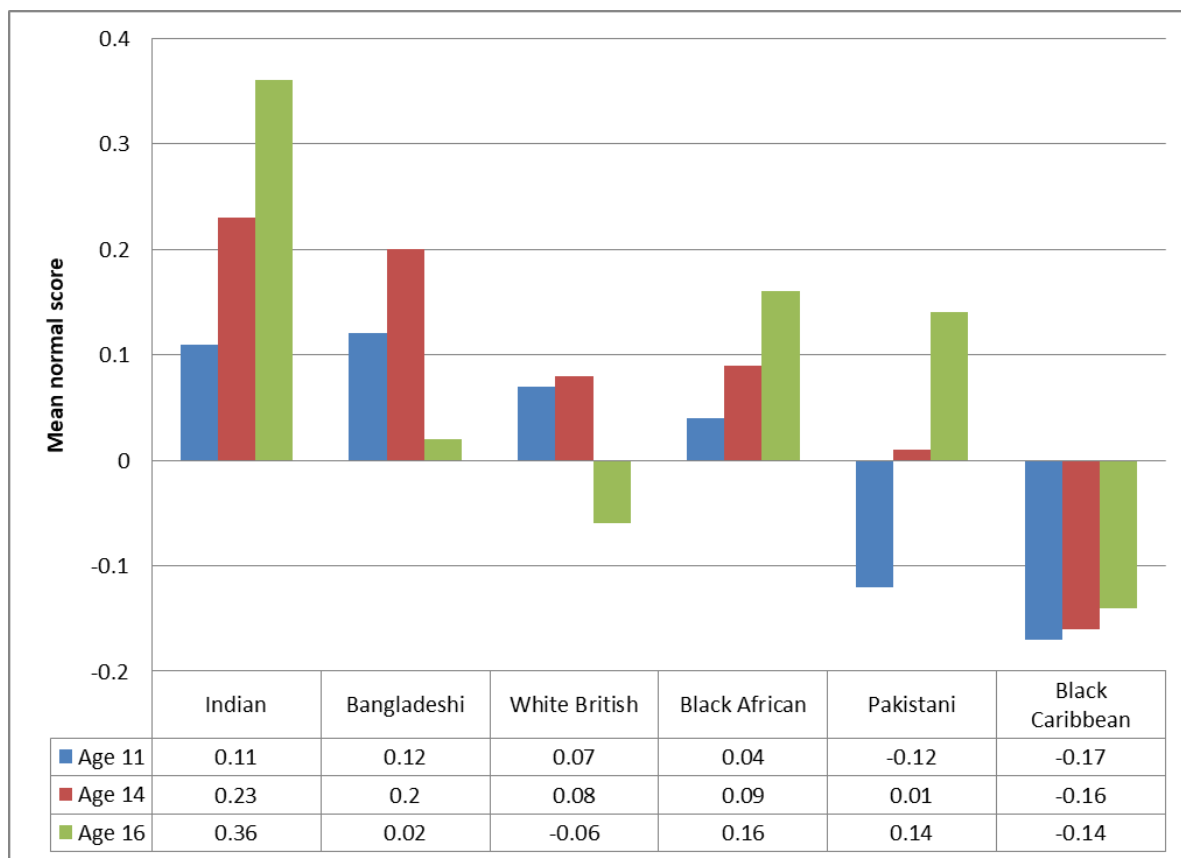


Figure 19: Achievement at ages 11, 14 and 16, SES middle quintile

Adapted from Strand (2014), "Ethnicity, gender, social class and achievement gaps at age 16: Intersectionality and 'getting it' for the white working class"

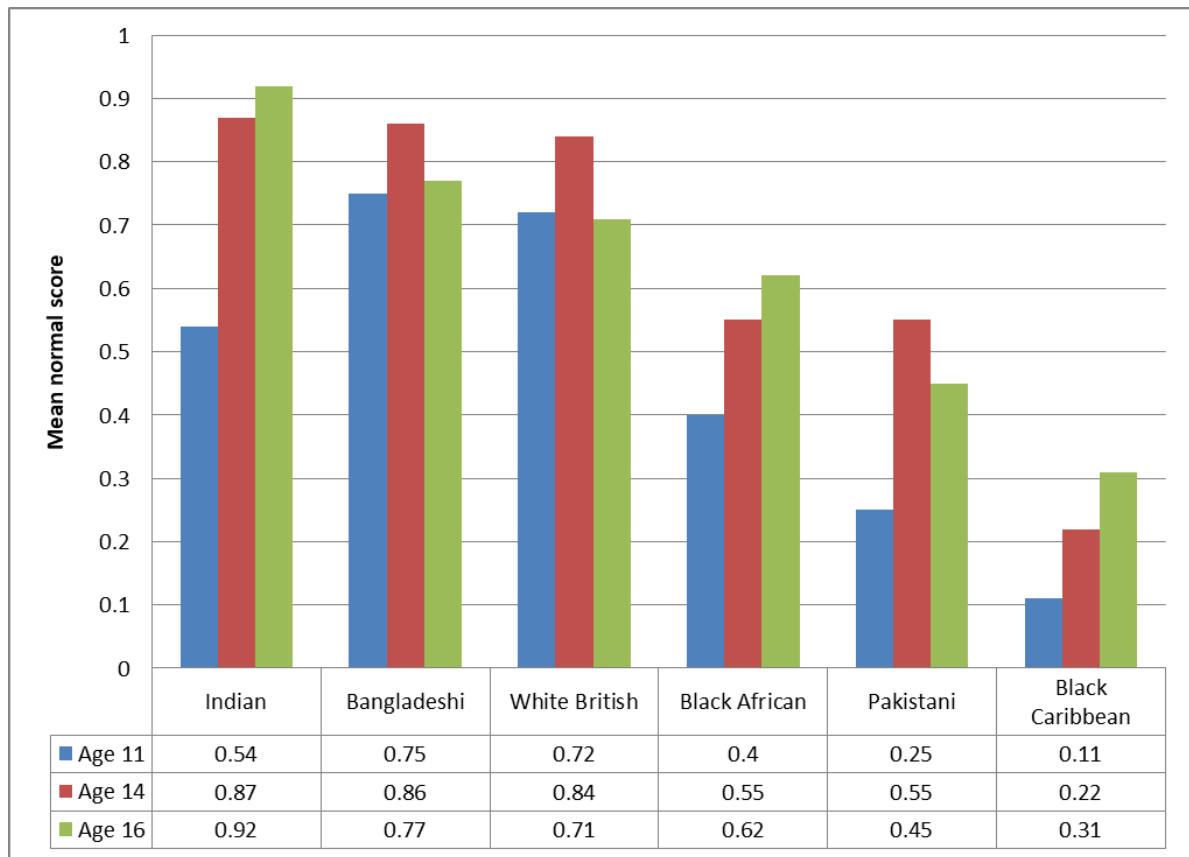


Figure 20: Achievement at ages 11, 14 and 16, SES top quintile

Adapted from Strand (2014), "Ethnicity, gender, social class and achievement gaps at age 16: Intersectionality and 'getting it' for the white working class"

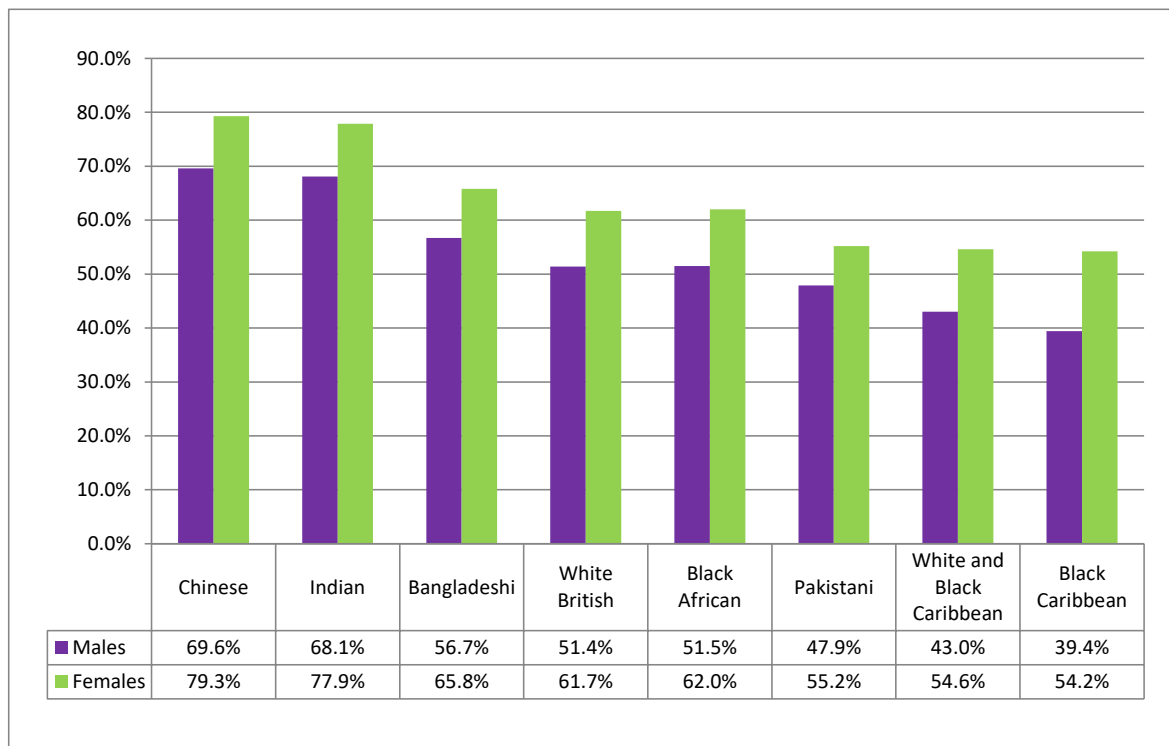


Figure 21: GCSE achievements by race and gender in 2014 (Source: DfE 2015b)

This figure shows that some ethnicities were achieving well and, in some cases, very well at GCSE level in 2014, however, this could not be said for the Black Caribbean students at the bottom of the table or the mixed-race Caribbean students near the bottom of the table. Hence these students were amongst the lowest achieving groups within the English education system in 2014.

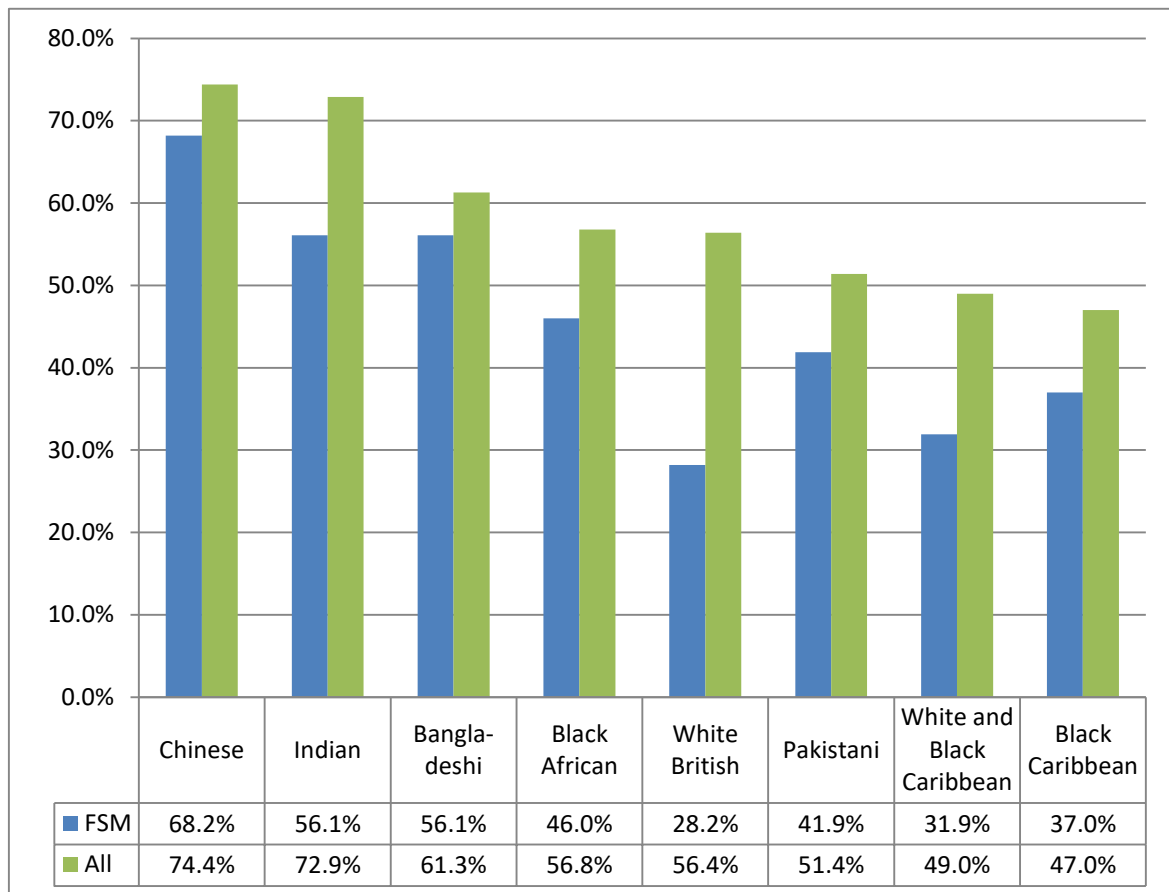


Figure 22: 2014 GCSE achievement by race and socio-economic disadvantage in 2014 (Source: DfE, 2015b)

This figure compares the achievement of students eligible for free school meals ('eFSM') against average achievement ('All') for a selection of ethnicities. The figure suggests that the impact on the achievement of social class depends upon a student's race, demonstrating the "intersectionality" of social class and race.

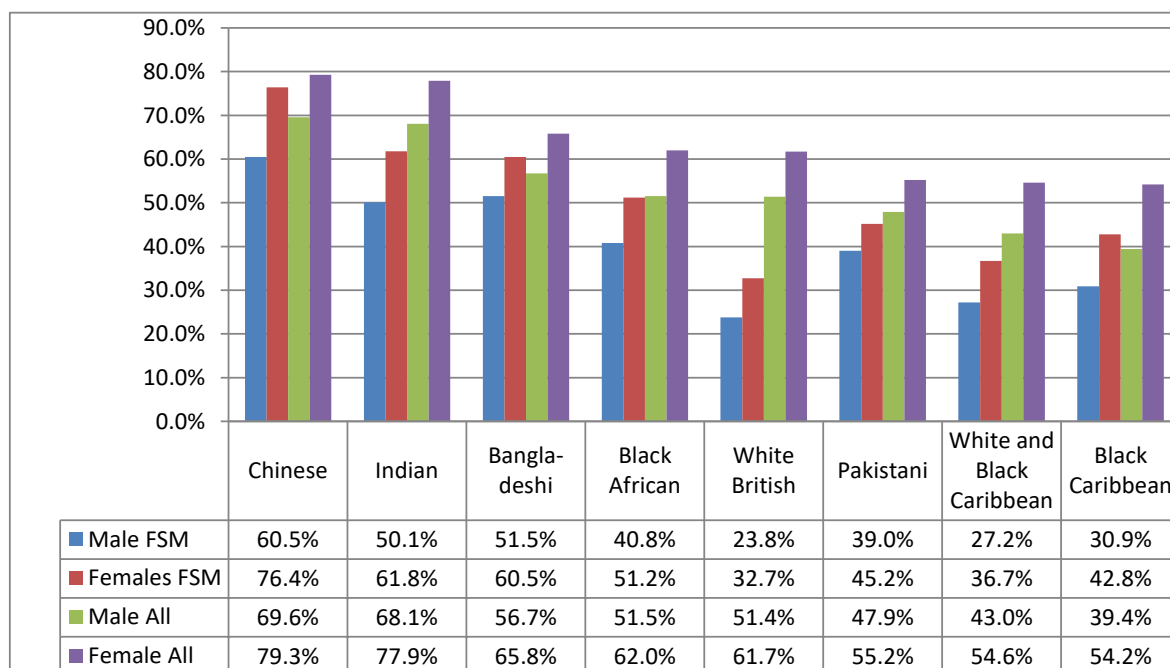


Figure 23: 2014 GCSE achievements by race, gender and socio-economic disadvantage in 2014 (Source: DfE 2015b)

This figure compares the achievement of students eligible for free school meals ('eFSM') of both genders against average achievement ('All') for a selection of ethnicities. The data indicates that poverty, as measured by eligibility for free school meals, had the greatest impact on White British male students' percentage scores.

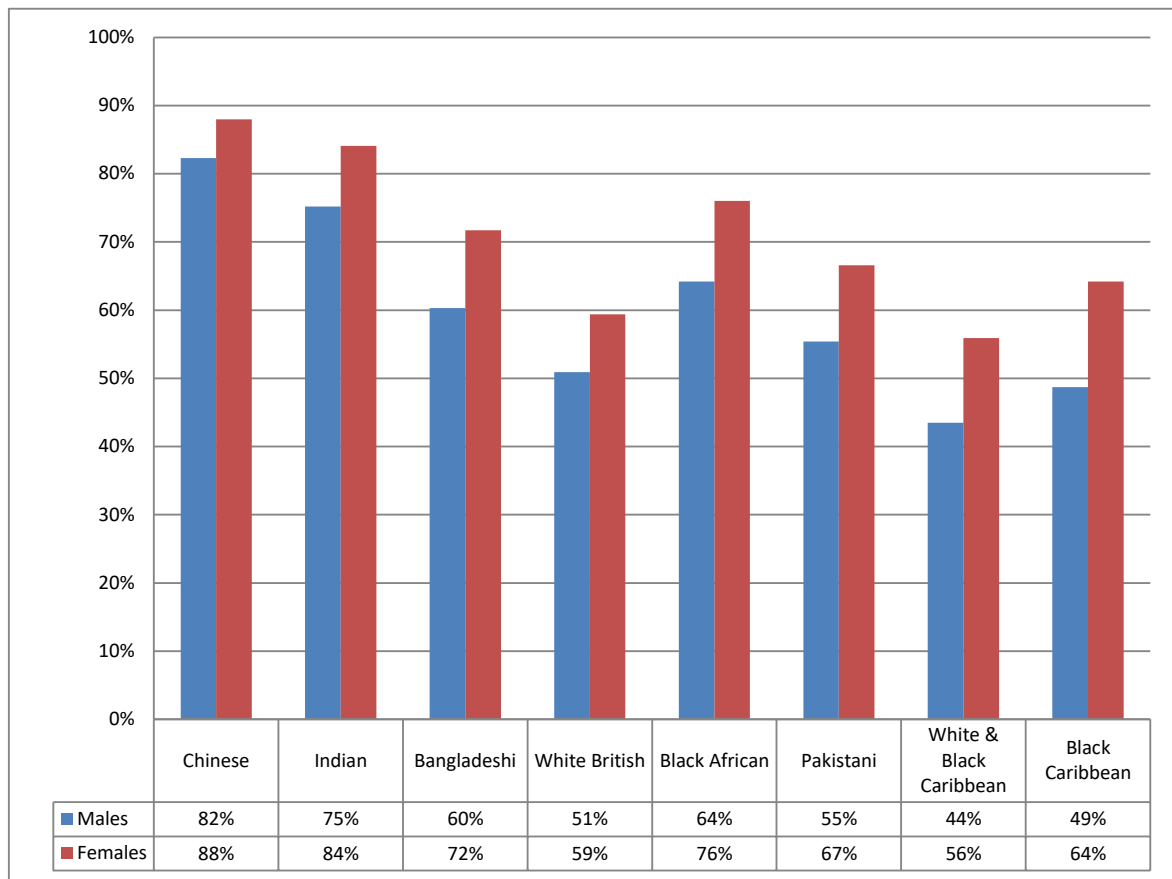


Figure 24: Level 3 achievement by age 19 in 2014 by race and gender (Source DfE, 2015a)

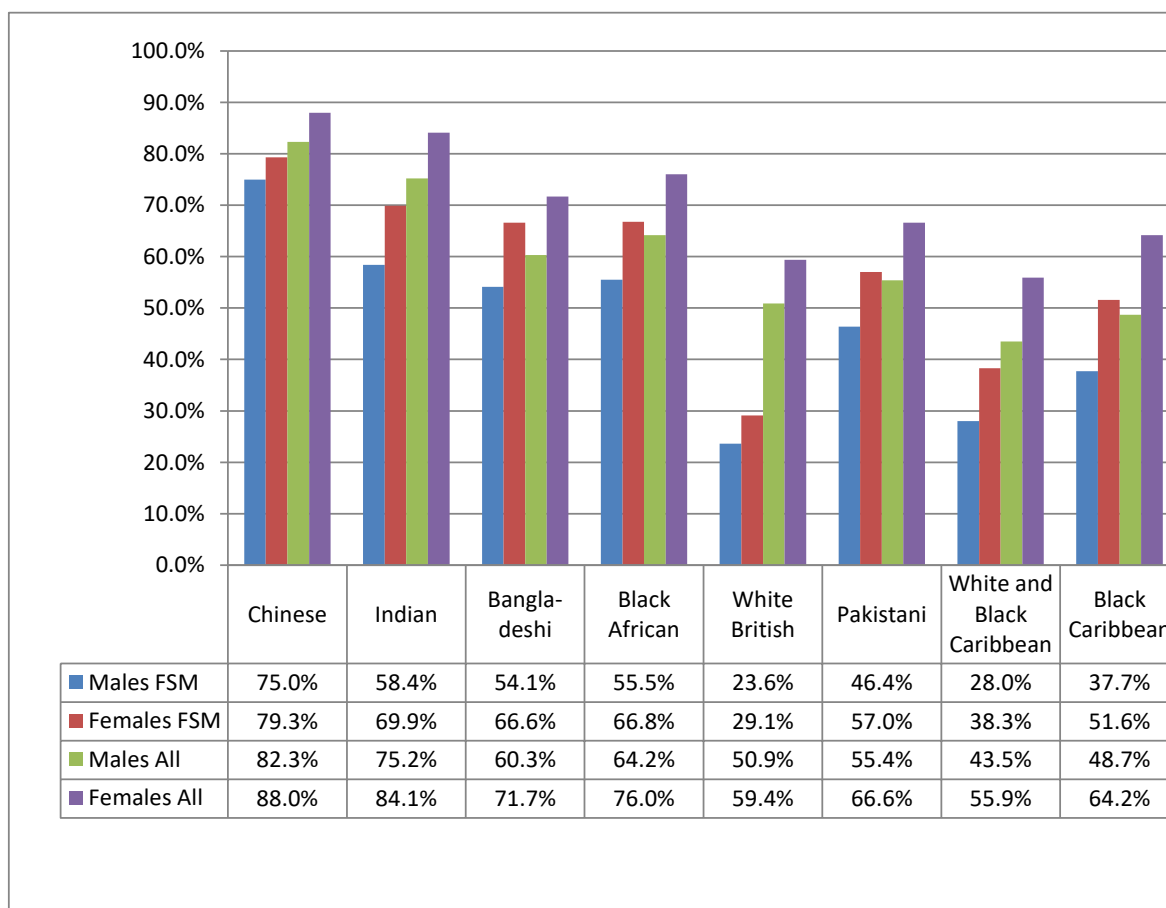


Figure 25: Level 3 achievement by age 19 in 2014 by race, gender and socio-economic disadvantage (Source DfE, 2015a)

This figure compares the achievement of students eligible for free school meals ('eFSM') of both genders against average achievement ('All') for a selection of ethnicities. The data indicates that poverty, when measured by the eligibility for free school meals, had the greatest impact on White male British students' percentage scores at level 3. However, when considering all students, Black Caribbean males and White and Black Caribbean males are at the bottom of this table of ethnicities.

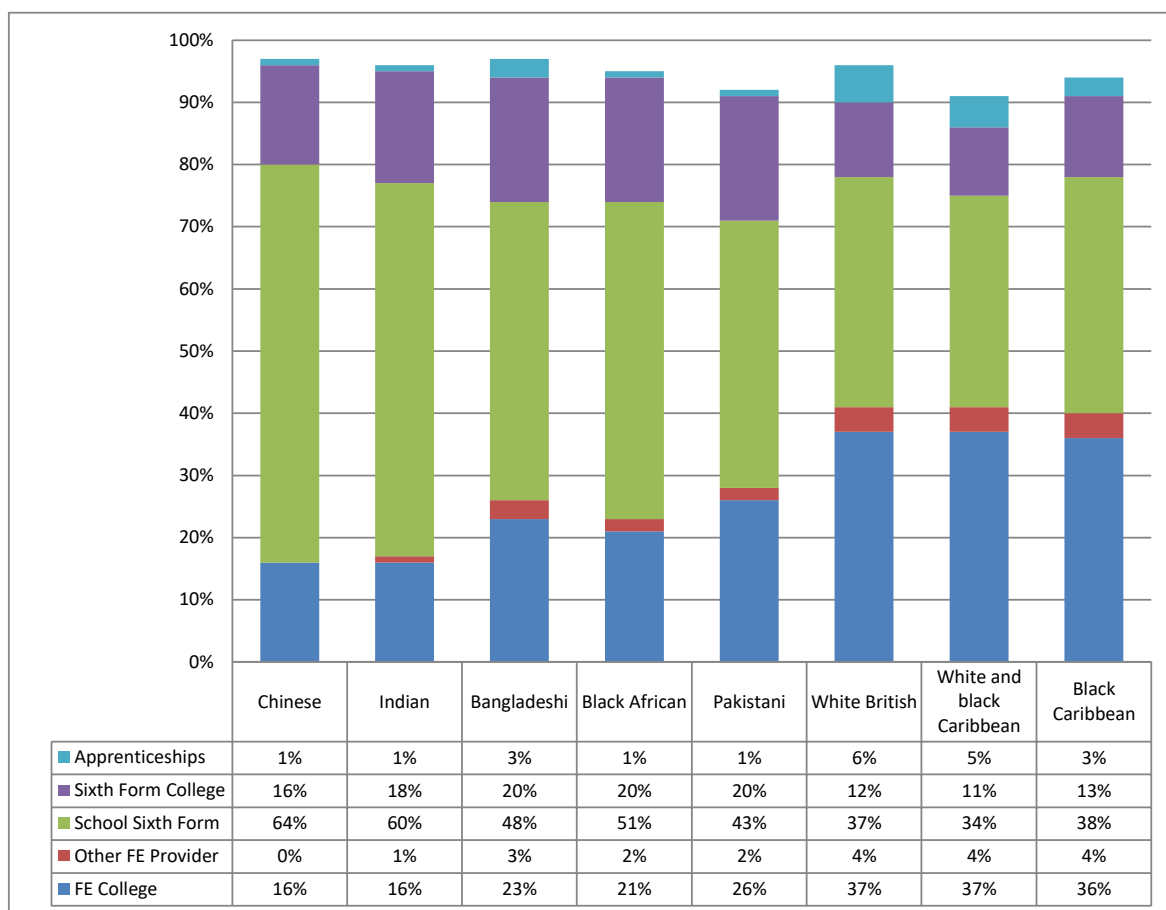


Figure 26: Destinations of students aged 16 in 2013 by race (Source: DfE, 2016)

This data does not appear to correlate well with the Level 3 students' destinations data – for example the profile of the destinations of Black Caribbean and White and Black Caribbean students aged 16 was like that of the White British students, but the White British students were much more successful at gaining admission to higher education.

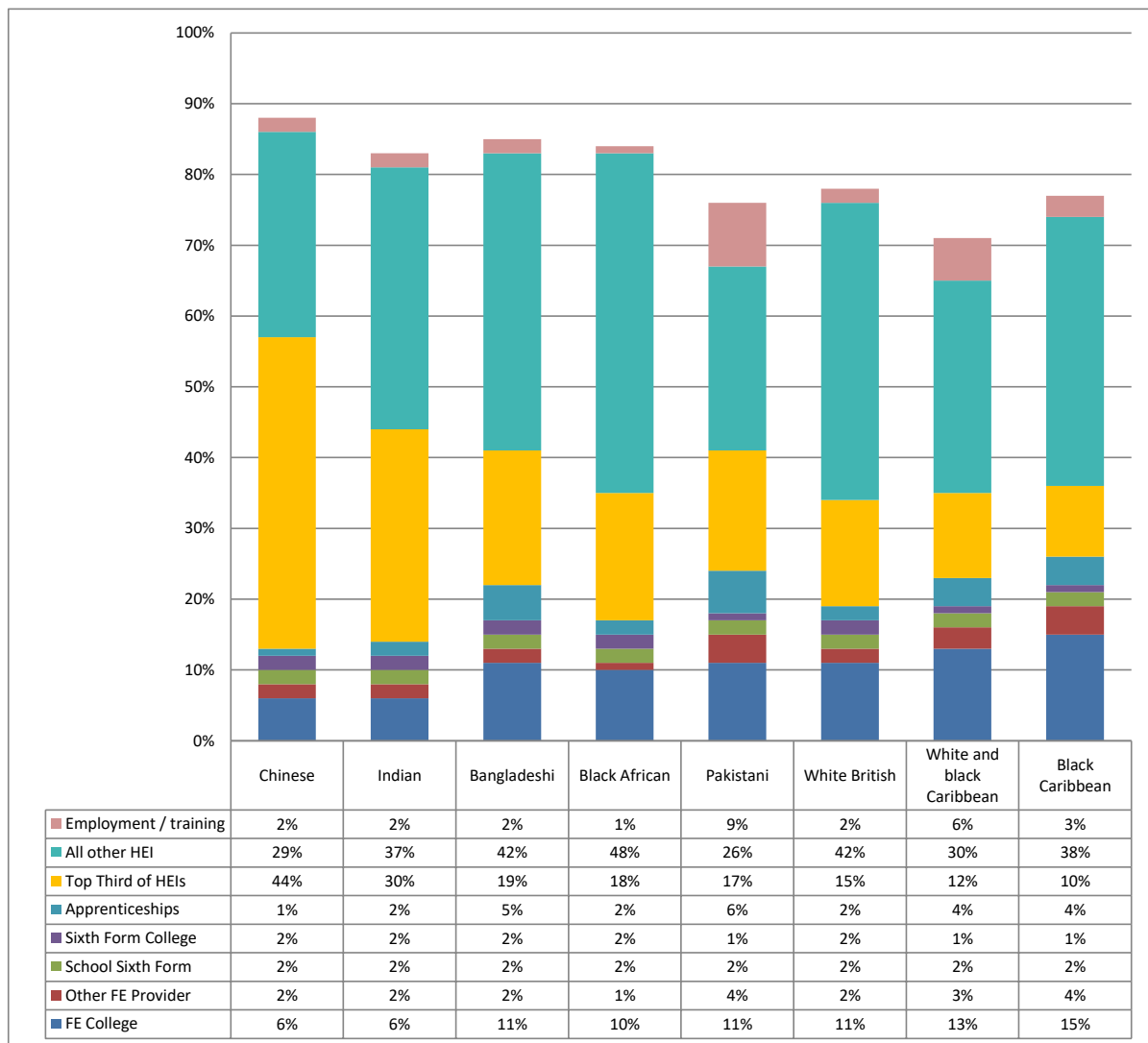


Figure 27: Destinations of students aged 18-19 in 2013 by race (Source: DfE 2016)

This figure indicates that for students aged 18-19 in 2013 some ethnicities were successful and, in some cases, very successful in gaining entry to higher education and particularly into the “top third” of higher education institutions, however, this could not be said for Black Caribbean students or White and Black Caribbean students.

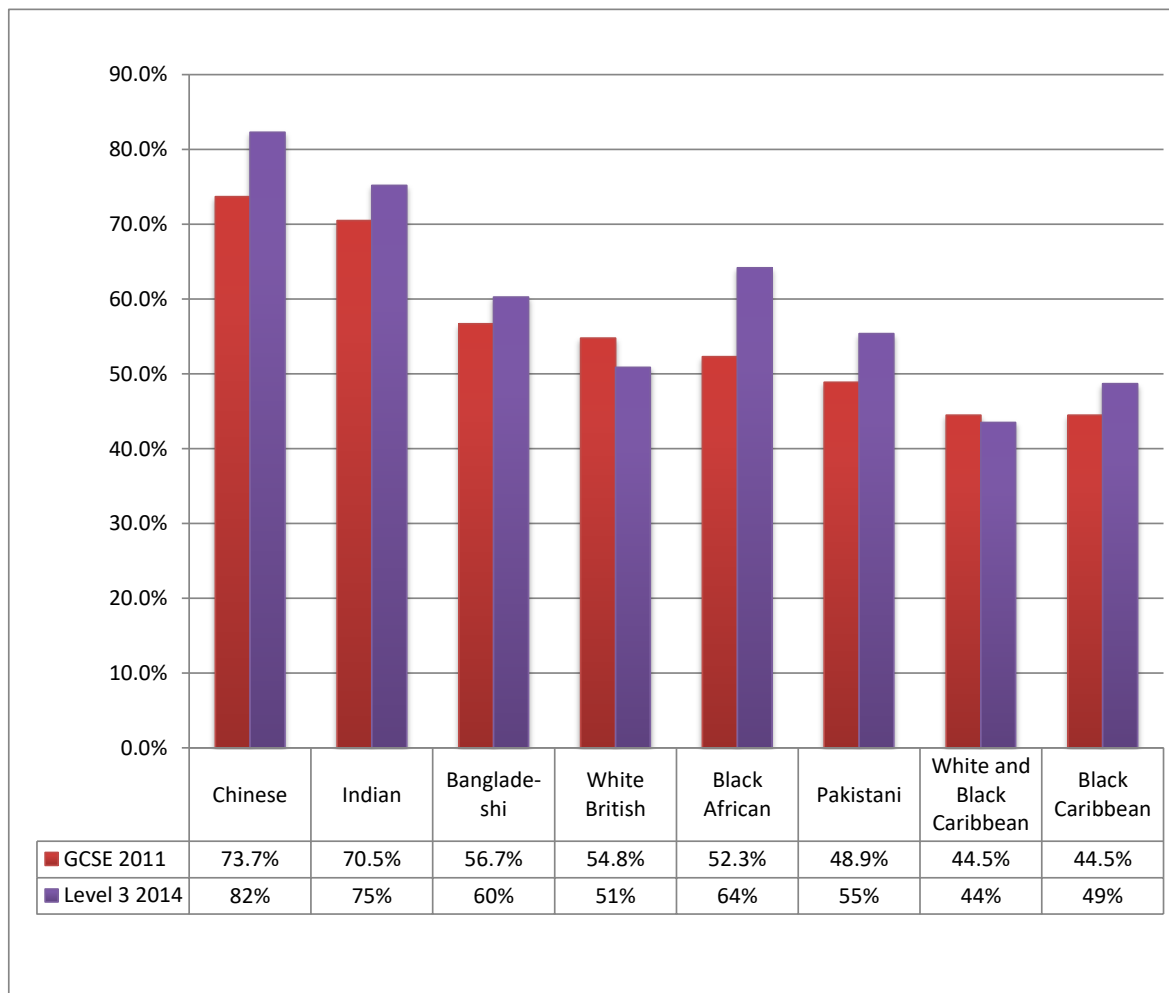


Figure 28: GCSE and Level 3 attainment in 2014 by race (Sources: DfE, 2015b; DfE 2015a)

Appendix B: University admissions data

HEIDI is a web-based management information service that provides access to a rich source of quantitative data about higher education, including data relating to university admissions gathered by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). To facilitate analysis of student admissions into universities by race and gender, a data set was obtained from the HEIDI database for first-year students whose level of study was 'first degree', for the academic years 2010/11 to 2014/15. The data fields requested were provider name, tariff bands, race (twelve categories) and gender. The HEIDI race categories did not differentiate between students of Black Caribbean mixed heritage origin and students of 'other' ethnic origin. Hence it was not possible to include these mixed-heritage students in the analysis. HESA's published data is rounded to the nearest five students to protect student anonymity. This data set from HEIDI was used to calculate all the figures presented in this section.

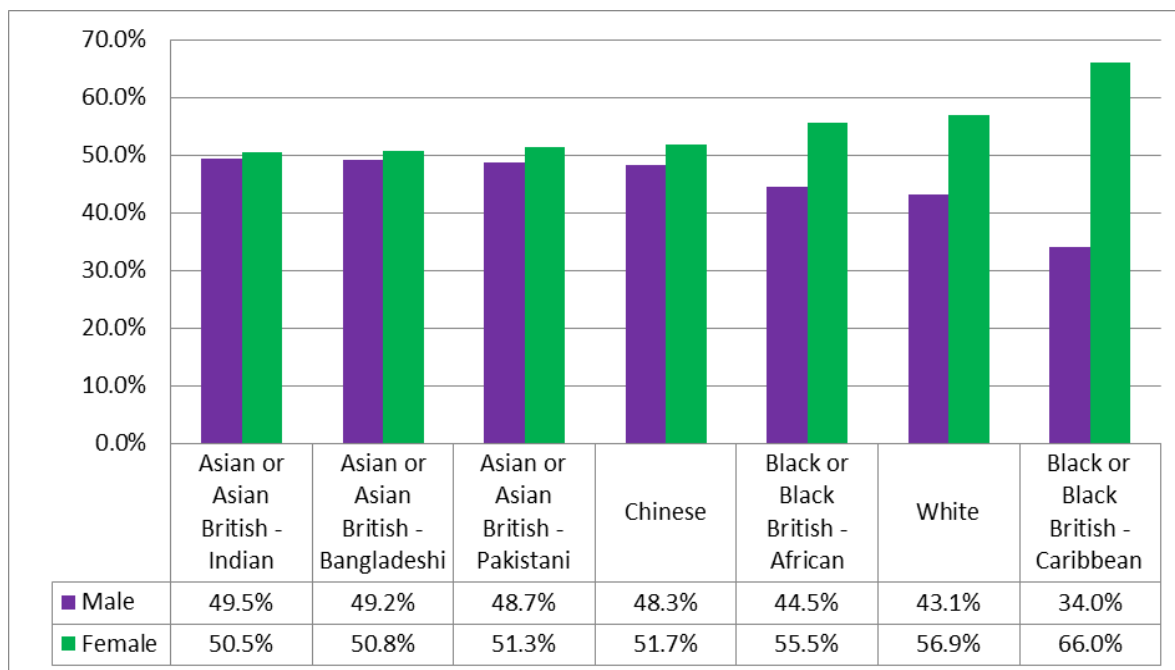


Figure 29: Gender ratios for 2014 university entrants by race (Source: HEIDI data set)

This figure clearly shows that many “Black or Black British - Caribbean” male students are failing to gain access into university.

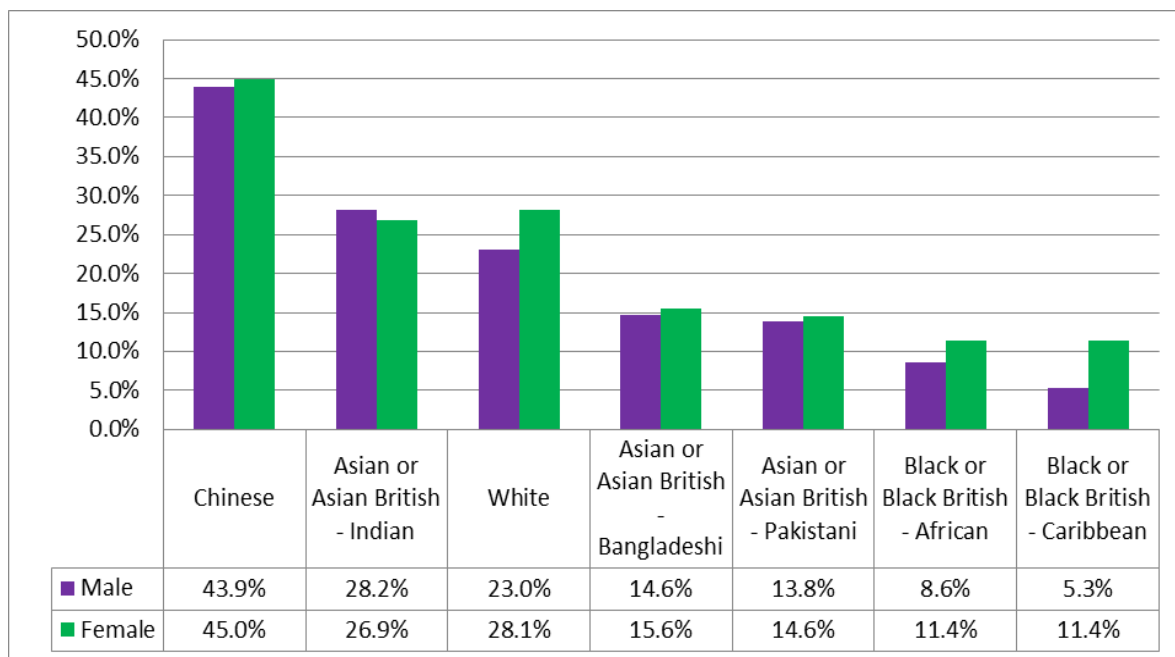


Figure 30: Gender ratios for 2014 “Russell group” university entrants by race

(Source: HEIDI data set)

This figure indicates that “Black or Black British - Caribbean” students are failing to gain admission into the elite “Russell group” of universities in sufficient numbers.

The Russell group is a self-selected association of twenty-four publicly funded top research universities in the United Kingdom.

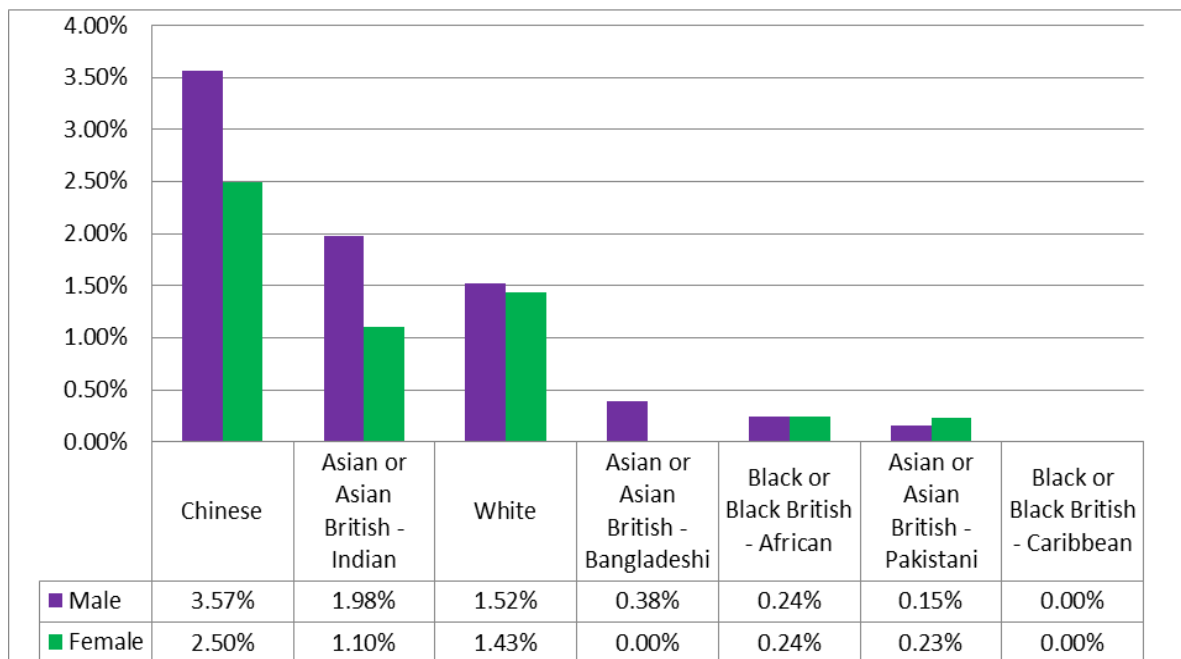


Figure 31: Gender ratios for 2014 Oxford and Cambridge university entrants by race (Source: HEIDI data set)

This figure indicates that virtually no Black Caribbean or Black British Caribbean students gain admission into Oxford or Cambridge University.

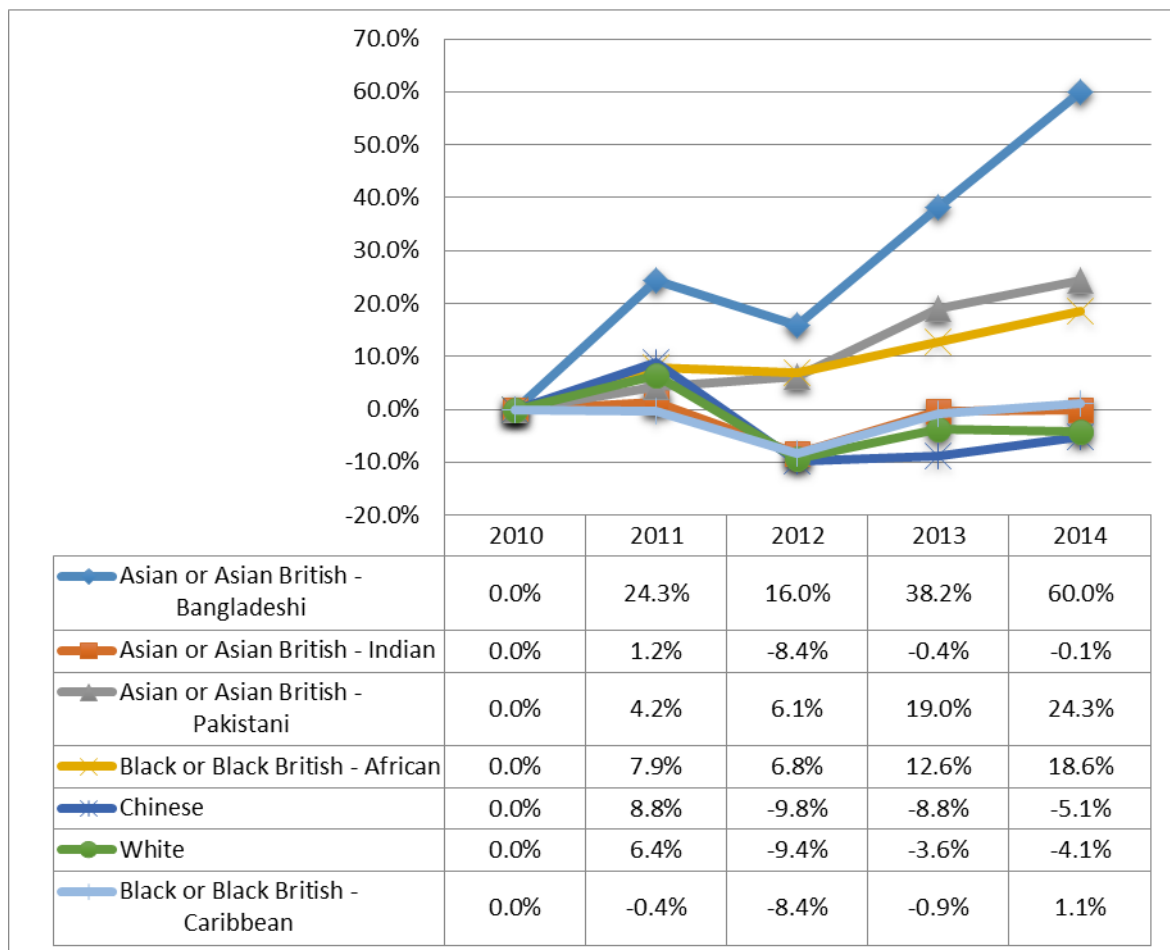


Figure 32: University admission trends for male students 2010-2014 by race

(Source: HEIDI data set)

Figure 1 and Figure 2 show increasing trends for GCSE and Level 3 achievement for “Black or Black British - Caribbean” male students. However, this chart shows that for this group, university admission figures have remained more or less static, showing minimal improvement during the four years shown.

Appendix C: Handouts for participants



Information leaflet for participants

Are you between the ages of 16+ to 19 and in full time education undertaking A level studies or vocational studies/training?

Let your voice be heard!

I am looking for black and mixed-race African-Caribbean heritage young people aged 16-19 to participate in a focus group session. Once completed, the research findings have the potential to make changes that could boost the educational achievement of African-Caribbean male learners.

What is the aim of this research?

This research is looking at the achievement of African-Caribbean males in sixth form and further education colleges. The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What factors contribute to their achievement or underachievement at this stage of their education?
2. How do learners' aspirations change over time, especially in relation to learning, progression and employment?
3. What are the lessons for policy and practice in the further education and skills sector?

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the research.

What is involved?

The focus group session will last about one hour. During the session we will be discussing your positive and negative experiences of the English education system and related topics and creating a written record of the points that arise in the discussions.

What will I be asked?

The focus group will be asked to consider a series of questions relating to their experience of education, their feelings about it, and their aspirations for the future.

Do I have to take part?

No. I am relying on your voluntary co-operation. No one is taking part in this study who does not wish to. Even if you say yes to begin with, you are free to withdraw at any time.

Is it confidential?

You will participate anonymously in this research and personally identifiable information will not be recorded. I will write a report of the study, but no individual will be identifiable from the published results of the research.

What happens next?

The outcome from the focus group session will be incorporated into the research findings for my Doctorate in Education (EdD) at the Open University. **"Progression of African-Caribbean learners in further education: Positive approaches for academic success"**

Researcher: Deavon Baker-Oxley



Dear participants

Please will you complete the questions below before we move onto our focus group activities.

How old are you?

Are you in your first or second year of study?

Which GCSEs did you achieve at school? Please provide the grades.

Other qualifications taken, with grades if applicable?

Which courses/programmes are you currently studying?

Which subjects are you studying, if applicable?

What is your gender?

What is your ethnicity?

Thank you

Deavon Baker-Oxley

Open university EdD student



The experiences of African-Caribbean learners within the further education and skills sector: Positive approaches to academic success

Focus group questions for learners:

1. Why did you choose a particular course?
2. What do friends on and outside of the course think of you doing this course?
3. What expectations do people have of you, e.g. family, friends, and tutors?
Rank in order of importance
4. What are your aspirations, and have they changed since starting, including higher education and employment plans?
5. If they have changed why?
6. What does achievement mean to you? Rank in order of importance
7. What factors contribute to your achievement? (Self, teacher, parents/carers, friends (stereotyping)) Rank in order of importance

8. What factors get in the way of your achievement? Rank in order of importance
9. Which topics within your subjects do you enjoy or identify with/relate to most or least and why?
10. Which topics acknowledge or value ethnic diversity?
11. Which aspects of the curriculum reflect your ethnicity



The experiences of African-Caribbean male learners within the further education: approaches to academic success and progression.

Structured questionnaire for tutors

1. What does learners' achievement mean to you?
2. How does the academic achievement of ethnic groups of learners differ?
3. Why do you think this is the case?
4. What strategies may improve African Caribbean learners' success?
5. How can teaching be made more relevant to learners from different cultural backgrounds?
6. What influences learners' levels of motivation?
7. What affects teachers' expectations for different groups of learners?
8. Thinking specifically about the achievement of different ethnic groups of learners:
 - 1) How could levels of motivation and aspirations be improved?
 - 2) How could curricula be improved?
 - 3) Do teachers' expectations have influence?
 - 4) Do peer groups have influence?

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire

Deavon Baker-Oxley

Open University EdD Student

Appendix D: Revision of focus group and teachers' questions after initial study

Following analysis of the participants answers to my study questions, reflection on experiences during the initial study, and taking the participants' feedback into consideration, the focus group questions for use in the main study were revised as outlined below:

Question	Participants feedback	New wording / action	Justification for change
Why did you choose a particular course?		Why did you choose the courses you are studying?	Clarification of the question.
What do your friends on and outside of the course think of you doing this course?		What do friends on and outside of the course think of you doing these courses?	Clarification of the question.
What expectations do people have of you?	All participants felt that that this question was very clear	What expectations do people have of you academically, for example family, friends, and tutors?	Not getting the information required.
What are your aspirations, and have they changed since starting, including higher education and employment plans?	One participant felt that that this question was hard to understand	What are your aspirations for the future? Have they changed since starting, including higher education and employment plans?	This question becomes more straightforward when split into two.
If they have changed why?		(unchanged)	
What does achievement mean to you?	All participants felt that that this question was very clear	What does academic achievement mean to you?	Some responses related to social achievement.

What factors contribute to your achievement?	All participants felt that that this question was very clear	What factors influence your academic achievement in a positive way?	Responses lacked clarity and did not specifically relate to factors that impact on academic achievement.
What factors get in the way of your achievement?	All participants felt that that this question was very clear	What factors influence your academic achievement in a negative way?	Need to emphasise this is about academic achievement.
What topics within your subjects do you enjoy or identify with/relate to most or least and why?	Two of the participants felt that that this question was hard to understand	(removed)	The following questions capture better the specific details required.
What topics acknowledge or value ethnic diversity?	One participant felt that that this question needed rewording	Introduce this question with a group discussion on the topic	Needs a group discussion to clarify the meaning of the question.
Which aspects of the curriculum reflect your ethnicity?	Two participants felt that that this question needed rewording and was hard to understand	Introduce this question with a group discussion on the topic	Needs a group discussion to clarify the meaning of the question.

Table 5: Revision of focus group questions

I revised the wording of the teachers' questions, taking into account the feedback obtained from the pilot study.

Question	Participants' feedback	New wording	Justification
What does learner achievement mean to you?		(unchanged)	
What are your perceptions of the academic achievement of different gender/ethnic groups?	No response to the aspect of ethnicity	How does the academic achievement of ethnic groups of learners differ? Why do you think this is the case?	Clarified to better investigate teachers' knowledge and perceptions.
What strategies improve learner success?		What strategies may improve African-Caribbean learners' success?	Specific to the subjects of the thesis.
In what ways are learners from different backgrounds helped to feel valued and respected?		(removed)	This aspect is covered more effectively by the subsequent questions.
How can teaching be made more relevant to learners from different cultural backgrounds?		(unchanged)	
Why is the cultural relevance of the curriculum important?		What influences learners' levels of motivation?	Broadened out to avoid repetition in later questions.
How does a culturally relevant curriculum empower learners?	All the questions are the same.	What affects teachers' expectations for different groups of learners?	Questions could be interpreted as repetitive and so were a wasted opportunity to gain further insight into the issues.

How can teachers' expectations for different groups of learners affect their levels of motivation?	The respondents did not consider the negative or positive impact, why?	Thinking specifically about the achievement of different ethnic groups of learners: 1) How could levels of motivation and aspirations be improved? 2) How could curricula be improved? 3) Do teachers' expectations have influence? 4) Do peer groups have influence?	The responses failed to provide sufficient insight into the impact of teachers' expectations on students' levels of motivation.
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Table 6: Revision of teachers' questions

Appendix E: Data from pre-focus group student questionnaire

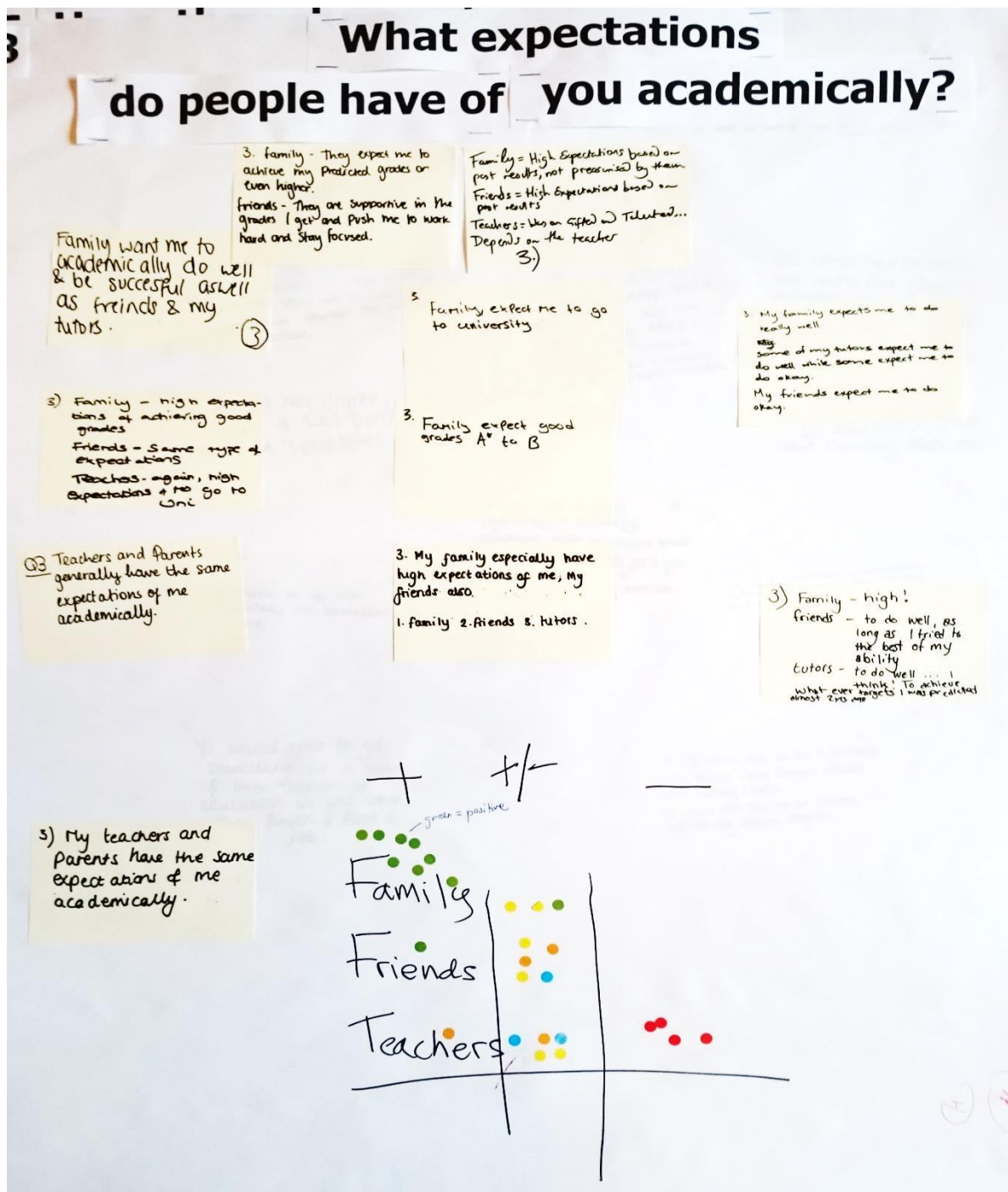
	How old are you?	What is your gender?	What is your ethnicity?	Are you in your first or second year of study?
1	18	Female	Black African	2nd
2	17	Female	Black Caribbean	1st
3	18	Female	Black Caribbean	1st
4	19	Female	Black African	2nd
5	18	Female	Pakistani	2nd
6	17	Male	Black Caribbean	2nd
7	18	Male	Black African	2nd
8	18	Male	British Afghan	1st retaking
9	18	Male	Black Caribbean	2nd
10	18	Female	Black Caribbean	2nd
11	19	Female	Black Caribbean	2nd
12	17	Female	Mixed Caribbean	2nd
13	18	Male	Jamaican	2nd
14	18	Female	Black Caribbean	2nd
15	17	Female	Black Caribbean	2nd
16	19	Female	Black Caribbean	2nd
17	18	Female	Black Caribbean	2nd
18	18	Female	Black Caribbean	2nd
19	17	Female	Black Caribbean	2nd
20	17	Male	Black Caribbean	1st
21	17	Male	Black Caribbean	2nd
22	17	Male	Black Caribbean	1st
23	17	Male	Black Caribbean	2nd
	All over 16 years			Four in first year. One retaking first year

	Which GCSEs did you achieve at school? Please provide the grades.
1	7 x C, 5 x B, English, Maths, Science
2	English - B Maths - C Science - C Citizenships - A Religious studies - B Statistics - C Health and Social care D*
3	Maths-C English- B Statistics -B Science- A History-C Citizenships- A Religious studies -B English Lit -C
4	Maths-C English language A English lit B Science- B Photography- B Religious studies -B Citizenships- C Dance-A* Performing Arts-B
5	8 B's, No subjects given
6	English language - C English lit C Maths -B Statistics-B Science Core-B Science add- C History-C Religious studies -C
7	Maths-A Physics-B English language - C Biology-B Chemistry-C Statistics - B Religious studies -B French-C IT BTEC-D* PE -OCR-Merit
8	Maths -C Science core1, B additional -C English -C Religious studies-C Geography-C
9	Maths -C Science-C Citizenships- A English -B History-B
10	Core science-B Additional science-C History-C Art-D English lit& lang B-B Maths-B Spanish-B
11	Biology-B Chemistry-A Physics-C Maths-B Statistics-B History-A Spanish -A French-A Citizenship -A Catering- B Hospitality-A R.E-A Psychology-B English language -B English lit-B
12	English language-A English lit-B Drama -A Science-B Media D*, Maths-C R.E -A, Citizenship-A, Science core-C, Spanish B, History -B
13	English-B Biology-A Geography-B Citizenship-C Maths-B Chemistry-C R.E-B Physics-C Psychology-A* Spanish -E
14	English lit-A English lang A* Sociology-A Drama-A Media D* Psychology-A History-A Maths pending
15	English language -C R.E-C Citizenship -B English lit- B Catering -B BTEC Media D* Geography- B
16	7 A's, 1 B, No subjects given
17	3 A* 4 A's 4 B's 2 C's 1 D No subjects given
18	2 A* 5 A's 3 B's 1 C 1 D No subjects given
19	3 B's 2 C's No subject given
20	Maths- E Science- E English language -E Art -C PE- D
21	Maths D English E E-C RE-B
22	Maths-F English Lang-E PE-F Sociology- G Science -Pass
23	Maths U- English -U Science -pass Media - pass
	All participant provided the grades but 5 of the 23 did not give the subject titles

	Were any of your exams at foundation level? If so which were they?	Other qualifications taken, with grades if applicable?
1	-	-
2	Statistics	Health and Social care D*
3	-	Health and Social care D*
4	-	BTEC performing arts -merit
5	-	-
6	Geography	-
7	-	BTEC-D*, PE -OCR-Merit
8	-	-
9	-	P.E & BTEC Sport-Merit
10	-	-
11	-	-
12	-	-
13	-	Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award
14	-	-
15	-	NVQ Level 1 Beauty therapy, BTEC Media D*
16	-	-
17	-	-
18	-	BTEC Media D* BTEC B BUSINESS D*
19	-	NVQ Beauty therapy course
20	Maths English Lang Art	Coaching
21	Maths -English lang	-
22	PE-Science-Maths-English	Coaching
23	Maths – English- Media	Coaching
	6 of 23 entered an exam at foundation level. Of 7 Black Caribbean males, 5 at foundation level, meant highest grade could be a C.	10 Of 23 undertook additional qualifications. Of 7 Black Caribbean male students 4 were retaking maths and English alongside BTEC.

	Which courses/programmes are you currently studying?	Which subjects are you studying, if applicable? Predicted grades?
1	'A' BTEC	Maths, Applied science
2	'A'	History (B), Sociology (C) Politics (C)
3	'A'	History (B), Sociology (C) Politics (C)
4	'A'	Media (B) Sociology (B) English (B) BTEC Health and social care (D*)
5	'A', BTEC Extended diploma	Film studies, BTEC ICT
6	'A'	Maths, Media, Economics
7	'A'	Maths (A), Biology (A), Chemistry (A)
8	'A'	Physics (A), Chemistry (B), Biology (B)
9	'A'	Law, English lit, Sociology
10	'A', BTEC Science	Psychology, Sociology, BTEC Science
11	'A'	Psychology, Biology, Spanish
12	'A'	History, Media, Psychology
13	'A'	Biology, Psychology, Sociology
14	'A'	English lit, Sociology, Drama
15	'A'	English lit, Sociology, Media studies
16	'A'	Maths, Physics, Economics
17	'A'	Sociology, English Lit, History
18	'A'	Geography, Art, Media
19	'A'	Art, Photograph, Media
20	BTEC	Sports and public services
21	BTEC	Sports and public services
22	BTEC	Sports and public services
23	BTEC	Sports and public services
		Of 23, 7 also studying BTEC. Of these 7, 4 Black Caribbean students are studying only BTEC.

Appendix F: Student focus group flip chart samples



7

What does academic achievement mean to you?

7) Academic achievement to me, means alot as I feel as though it'll determine my future: both academically & my success

7) Academic achievement is very important for me because it sets up the foundation for the rest of your life.

7. It means to Academic Achievement means I will have a better start at achieving my goals for the future.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT TO ME MEANS PASSING MY GRADES & SUCCEEDING IN EDUCATION ⑦

7. A gateway to a successful career

7. It means doing well in my exams so I can go on to get a higher education to get the job I want.

7) Academic Achievement is quite important in a world where degrees / grades are increasingly being referenced. FAMILY & FRIENDS want to succeed. Teachers see your grade as a reflection of them, only some care, preparing pupils for work force.

7) It means a lot right now, just to be successful & not be another dropout from Sixth Form / someone who leaves with nothing.

7. Academic achievement means to me being able to do well in most of your subjects. Having a successful career as a result of this.

Q7 How well you do in your subjects based on what you're capable of

Appendix G: Data recorded from student focus group sessions

1	Why did you choose the courses you are studying?
	<p>Enjoy / passion / interest / good at it (10)</p> <p>Career / job (8)</p> <p>University / degree (8)</p>
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative subjects and [I] enjoy them, feel confident in them. • Because I'd like to [get] into fashion industry, in[to] university and have my job in that industry. • I decided to do these courses because they are useful for the degree I am applying for. • I enjoyed some at GCSE and the others [I chose] just because they looked respectable. • I enjoyed the subjects. I did well in GCSE in [those] subjects and I'd like a career related to [them]. • I've always had a passion for history and it has always been my favourite subject. English literature and sociology seem to compliment history as a subject. • I enjoy biology and psychology more than most subjects. • Because I enjoy some of them, and the others are related to what I want to study at university. • Sociology was mainly to fill a space. • Psychology and sociology, because I wanted to study this at university.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I enjoy the nature of the subject. • Media: I enjoy it • Interested [in the subject]. • Because I'm good at IT. • Wish to pursue a career in it. • To help further my career! • Relevant to my career path. • Because I was interested in them and also because I hope to study politics and international relations at university. • I chose English literature due to my aspirations to go on and study literature at university. I also chose sociology so I can study criminology at university in a joint honours. • I study maths because I enjoy it, I study applied science because its' something I'll have access to do in the course I applied for, for university. (Diagnostic Radiography) • Personal life experiences.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To become a physiotherapist. • My family advise me to choose this course. • To become a personal trainer. • To keep active ... I enjoy playing sports such as football as I want to make it into pro.

2	What do friends on and outside of the course think of you doing these courses?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive (9) • no opinion (3) • difficult, lot of work (3) • aiming high; smart (2) • Good choice (1) • Encouraging (1) • Interested (1) • Cool and different (1) • inspirational (1) • respectable (1) • Surprised (1)
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They think it's a good choice and that they link very well to what I'd like to choose in university. • My friends are very encouraging of course and for sociology / English they are in my classes. • They are supportive, they don't mind. I have a friend doing one of the same subjects outside of school. • Some friends are interested in the different things I learn about. • They can't see themselves doing the subjects I do. They think English is particularly hard but think I have an ability for it. • Some think that they are hard because we have different interests in what we study, so they would never pick my subjects. • Friends are generally supportive about my subject choice. • My friends think that it is a lot of work doing the subjects that I have chosen. • They think the subjects I've chosen are respectable, and give me options later in life. They're relatively happy with me on the course / courses. • My friends are happy with me doing the course as most of my friends study at least one subject the same as me.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My friends are also doing the same course - a few. • Surprised, because most females are studying health and social care or beauty. • They have no opinion of my choice. • They think it's cool and different. • They think I am following my dream and work hard. My friends and family are really positive about it. • They don't care as long as I like it. • Friend doing maths think I'm smart. • They don't care. • Some of my friends think I'm a bit different because am aiming high. • My friends on the course think this is good as we are trying to better our lives; whilst my friends outside of school think what I'm doing is inspirational as it means I'm not in their position. • Happy for me.

C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy that I'm doing the course. • They are happy that we are doing something that we like. • They are really happy I'm doing the course. • My coach [was] happy that I chose sport, so I understand more about sport.
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3	What expectations do people have of you academically, e.g. family, friends, and tutors? (to be ranked in order of importance by group)																
	Family, Friends, Teachers, Police, Self.																
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family – they expect me to achieve my predicted grades or even higher. Friends - they are supportive in the grades I get and push me to work hard and stay focused.• Family - high expectations based on past results, not pressurised by them. Friends - high expectations based on past results. Teachers - was on gifted and talented. Depends on the teacher.• Family want me to academically do well and be successful as well as friends and my tutor.• Family expect me to go to university.• Family expect good grades A* to B.• My family expect me to do well. Some of my tutors expect me to do well some expect me to do okay. My friends expect me to do okay.• Family – high expectations of achieving good grades. Friends same type of expectations - teachers again, high expectations and to go to university.• Teachers and parents generally have the same expectations of me academically.• My family especially have high expectations of me, my friends also. 1: Family 2: Friends 3: Teachers.• Family - high! Friends- to do well, as long I tried to the best of my ability. Tutors - to do well ... I think! To achieve whatever targets, I was predicted almost 2 years ago.• My teacher and parents have high expectations of me academically. <p>The response from the A group overwhelming indicated that their families / parents had high expectations of them academically. However, some participants indicated that families could be both positive and negative regarding their expectations for the participants' academic achievement. This was also indicated for friends and teachers during the voting when expectations were both positive and negative. The only group that some participants identified as having only negative expectations were teachers.</p> <table><tr><td>Categories</td><td>positive</td><td>positive / negative</td><td>negative</td></tr><tr><td>Family</td><td>8</td><td>3</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>Friends</td><td>1</td><td>5</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>Teachers</td><td>1</td><td>5</td><td>4</td></tr></table>	Categories	positive	positive / negative	negative	Family	8	3	0	Friends	1	5	0	Teachers	1	5	4
Categories	positive	positive / negative	negative														
Family	8	3	0														
Friends	1	5	0														
Teachers	1	5	4														

B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They expect me to do very well and achieve high grades such as A's. • My family believe that I'm going to get good grades. • I don't think teachers encouraged me in the past. • I feel through secondary school I was not encouraged. • Family - they just want me to do well in whatever I [do]. • My family members and friends expect me to achieve highly. • Friends - to do well. • Step mum expects me to fail. • To get A*/A, in applied science. My family think that anything I achieve they would be proud. • My friends and family want me to do well but sometimes I feel very overwhelmed by it. • Friends don't have an opinion. • My family want me to do well and try my best to achieve the highest grades. • My family has high expectations of me academically, but they don't even know if I'm capable of achieve high grades. • Some want me to fail – parents, friends. • Police don't want me to succeed. They want me to perpetuate the stereotype. • Myself - self- doubt • They have academic expectations. My mother knows that I need to achieve academically to make something out of life. 												
	<p>The responses from the B group overwhelming indicated that their families / parents had high expectations of them academically. Friends were less significant, and the category of 'others', which included teachers, were said to have negative expectations of them academically.</p> <table> <tr> <th>Categories</th><th>positive</th><th>negative</th></tr> <tr> <td>Family</td><td>8</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Friends</td><td>1</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr> <td>Others</td><td>0</td><td>6</td></tr> </table>	Categories	positive	negative	Family	8	1	Friends	1	0	Others	0	6
Categories	positive	negative											
Family	8	1											
Friends	1	0											
Others	0	6											
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very high expectations by family, friend's teachers • My mum expects to do well in doing my course • Everyone has high expectations for me • Everyone had high expectations for me 												
	<p>However, when questioned further the teacher's high expectations meant to achieve a 'C' grade.</p> <table> <tr> <th>Categories</th><th>positive</th></tr> <tr> <td>Family</td><td>4</td></tr> <tr> <td>Friends</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr> <td>Teachers</td><td>1</td></tr> </table>	Categories	positive	Family	4	Friends	1	Teachers	1				
Categories	positive												
Family	4												
Friends	1												
Teachers	1												

4	What are your aspirations for the future?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term • University (13) • Long term • Solicitor (1) • Actress (1) • Well paid job / good job / good career (9) • Sport (3) • Master's (1) • Accountant / actuary (1) • Teaching / educational psychologist (2) • Pilot (1) • Medicine / diagnostic radiography / paediatrician (3) • Own business (1) • Be rich (1)
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the future, I want to complete a 4yr history degree, and then do a law conversion course to become a solicitor. • I want to be an actress. I live drama and acting. To do it professionally. However, in the short term [I aspire] just to get my A-levels and possibly go to university. • I want to go to university, but academically I don't know what I want to do there. • Completing a foundation year course, then going to university and getting a job soon after that I will enjoy and [that] pays enough for me to live comfortably. • To get my degree, have a well-paid job and be successful • I would like to study psychology and sociology combined. After my degree, travel to America or Canada for a year or two. [Then] come back to England to start my master's [degree]. • To be a successful accountant [or] actuary with a good job working in the city. • I would like to go travelling for a year ... then return to education in university ... then finish and find a job. • I would like to be a journalist, who writes about current affair and worldly issues. I would also like to achieve well in my chosen degree. • Be successful, love what I'm doing. • I aspire to go into medicine via biomedical sciences.

B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a good career. • Go to university to study politics and international relations. • To get a work placement between the 2nd and 3rd year of my course. • Go to university. • To travel as part of my course. • Finish university with a chemistry degree, then join the RAF to become a pilot. After I finish in the RAF, [to] join commercial airlines. • Become a teacher. • The career I want to do [is] diagnostic radiography in different hospitals around the world. • I want to be an educational psychologist. • I want to travel the world. • Be rich. • Passing A-levels so I can go to a good university. • To become a university student, become a scholar, set up my own business and be a banker, [and] help out the motherland. • To get a good job to do with crime. • My aspiration for the future is to become a paediatrician.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My aspirations in the future [are] to be happy in life and [to] be successful. • I see myself becoming a physio or coach and I want to be well off. • My aspiration for the future is to make it into football and to earn as much money as possible. • I see myself ... becoming a sport coach, rugby player, sprinter, boxer and kick boxer.

5	Have they changed since starting, including higher education and employment plans?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed (13) • Became more determined (1) • Not changed (7) • Never know what I want to do (1)
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My aspirations have not changed, only that I want to do a history degree instead of law. • Not since A level, but during GCSE I wasn't too sure about [my] specific career path. • Not really, I've always wanted to do good. • No, they have not changed. • My career goals have changed since joining education (A-levels). • [I] have grown in determination to achieve them, [but] kept similar subjects because they hold value for me and are associated with my interest. • Nope, there has been no change. • Yes they have. I used to want to get into medicine but now I have found I am more interested in forensics. • Only slightly. I realised I wanted to study both sociology and psychology to broaden my options. • I've never know what I want to do. But it did range from journalism to history to law for higher education.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No • Yes, I've chosen a different career path. • I did economics [and] psychology before I studied maths and applied science. • Change from physics course ... to chemistry course in university. • My priorities haven't changed but I feel differently about what [I am] going to do to get there. • My aspirations have changed. • Yes. I changed sixth form. I wanted to be a lawyer • I haven't changed but when I failed my 1st year I did almost change until I had someone inspirational speak to me.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • Yes • Yes • Yes

6	If they have changed why?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraged to a degree I was very interested in and passionate • They have changed since GCSE because I learnt more about different career options • They have changed due to looking into more options when applying to university • careers advice realised that I could combine • find forensics more interesting • need to be more realistic • Need maths A level • I just had a different plan • I did not enjoy the subjects • I altered what I wanted
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was encouraged to [do] a degree I was very interested in and passionate about. • I've always had the same plan of where I'd like to be in my head. • I learned more about different career options. • I started to find forensics more interesting and I don't want to be stuck in a job that I hate. • I feel I need to be more realistic. I want to act but realistically this will be difficult- which leaves higher education, [but] I don't know what I want to do. Hence it always changing. • They have changed due to looking into more options when applying to university. Also participating in a work placement helped show me what I wanted to do when I'm older.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need maths A level for physics in university. • I spoke to the careers advisor who helped me realise what I truly want to do. • I just had a different plan, realised I enjoyed reading [more] than being a lawyer. • I did not enjoy the subjects! • I altered what I wanted to do, as I feel I should ... be helping the community [rather than] just myself. • I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do at university. I realised that I could combine criminology with English after starting sociology A2.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many Black boys I know who have been in football don't make it and they were better, so I think I have to choose [something else]. • I am learning new things for my course ... about humans and athletics / athletes. • I realised that singing wasn't my strong point and football was, so I changed my mind and decided to play football in school. • My family members told me about the jobs that I wanted to do and told me stick to the sport then see what you want to do next.

7	What does academic achievement mean to you? (to be ranked in order of importance by group)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determine my future • security • the foundation for the rest of your life. • not be another dropout from sixth form/ someone who leaves with nothing • better start at achieving my goals for the future. • being able to do well in most of your subjects. Having a successful career as a result of this. • passing my grades and succeeding in education. • A gateway to a successful career • go on to get a higher education to get the job I want • is more of learning • Constantly improving • Getting good grades • To be successful and happy • Makes me feel that I can do a lot with my life • To be proud and make others proud • Academic achievement is really important to me, respect, shows that you are valuable • To make myself proud • To please my parents
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [It] means a lot as I feel as though it'll determine my future: both academically and my successes (4 votes). • Academic achievement is quite important in a world where degrees/grades are increasingly being required. Family see it as security. Friends want us to succeed. Teachers see your grade as a reflection of them: only some care, preparing pupils for the workforce (2 votes). • How well you do in your subject based on what you're capable of. • Academic achievement is very important for me because it sets up the foundation for the rest of your life (2 votes). • It means a lot right now, just to be successful and not be another dropout from sixth form / someone who leaves with nothing (0 votes). • Academic achievement means that I will have a better start at achieving my goals for the future (0 votes). • Academic achievement means to me being able to do well in most of your subjects. Having a successful career as a result of this (0 votes). • Academic achievement to me means passing my grades and succeeding in education (1 vote). • A gateway to a successful career (0 votes). • It means doing well in my exams, so I can go on to get a higher education to get the job I want (0 votes).

B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think that academic achievement is more ... learning (1 vote). • Constantly improving (1 vote). • Getting good grades (1 vote). • To be successful and happy (1 vote). • Makes me feel that I can do a lot with my life (0 votes). • To be proud and make others proud (0 votes). • Academic achievement is really important to me, [brings] respect, shows that you are valuable (0 votes). • To make myself proud (0 votes). • Having more choices (0 votes). • Ability to have a better life chance (1 vote) (0 votes). • To please my parents (0 votes) • Make my parents proud mainly my mum (5 votes). • Making my mum proud (0 votes) • It means a lot to me but I think it means more to my mum (0 votes). • It means a smile on my mum's face and I may move out of relative poverty (0 votes).
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be successful (0 votes). • To be successful in life and hit some goals that I may have in the future (0 votes). • Reaching my goals. Making my mum proud (1 vote). • Getting far in life and making myself, family and friends proud. Aiming to get a better life for my family, being the best in my family (3 votes).

8	What factors influence your academic achievement in a positive way? (e.g. Self, teacher, parents / carer, friends) (to be ranked in order of importance by group)								
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self, I tend to motivate myself. • Self, I go to places with few distractions to revise. • Self - organisation skills, teachers - providing exemplar essays and giving framework for essays, family - helping - time management, peers - comparison of work / essays. • (1) Myself - self-motivation, (2) friends, (3) parents, (4) teachers. • Myself - time management, my parents - encourage me to do well, teachers - some make revision easy whilst some make it more difficult so that I have to put more time into my revision. • Self; my mother - has always made it clear that my qualifications belong to me, not [put] pressure on me but encouraged pursuits, friends - my friendship groups are quite driven, we all encourage each other, teachers - some very positive and want you to do well, others have a lack of patience / [are] not bothered. • Lots of free time, the importance of the deadline, if it will contribute a lot to my overall grade and there will be strict consequences, if I the enjoy work / motivation. • My parents, my teachers, myself, carers and friends. • My friends and family influence my achievement. • My family is a big encouragement as well as my teachers who may praise my work, which is a booster. • Some friends encourage me to work. • My teachers and parents mostly, then myself. 								
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category (selected by A participants)</th><th>Number of votes</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Family</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr> <td>Myself</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr> <td>Teacher</td><td>0</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Category (selected by A participants)	Number of votes	Family	5	Myself	3	Teacher	0
Category (selected by A participants)	Number of votes								
Family	5								
Myself	3								
Teacher	0								

B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I thinking about what I want to do in the long run. • The drive to make money! • My bothers support and care. • My mum, my sister, my teachers • My career path • My self • The drive to make money, the drive to make something of my life. • Family motivate me • My family and friends • Pressure from school to do well • To be in a good job • Friends help because you want to be equal with your friends in an academic way. • To support my parents due to not liking to see them struggle • My ambition to succeed in the future, my desire to make my mum proud, my desire to be rich • Make sure that I do better than my parents 		
	Category (selected by B participants)	Number of votes	
	Family	8	
	Money	2	
	School	1	
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My mum • Myself • Family • Family –cause they all have a career and they want me to have my own • My mum influence me and some of my cousins • My mum and grand- mother and dad influence to do the right thing 		
	All four 'C' participants voted for 'Family'		

9	What factors influence your academic achievement in a negative way? (to be ranked in order of importance by group)
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distractions: phone, computer, being tired, not having enough time in the day, family commitment, chores, not preparing enough when I have many other deadlines at the same time (8 votes). • If teacher is lazy or you do not get along with them it's quite frustrating, but you've just have to depend on your own studies (1 vote). • Overwhelming work load (1 vote). • Distractions, movies and such on the computer. • Lack of sufficient sleep. • My tendency to waste time on my phone / laptop or sleeping, lack of motivation, not understanding lessons. • Distractions when revising impact my achievement for example TV [and] online blogs. • Technology, friends, at times myself. • Self (time management, distraction), friends (distractions, socialising etc.), family (family commitment), work (time management). • Social media and different events like parties, if I know when coursework is due. • Busy schedule. • Time - can't balance it effectively, motivation. • Time management due to after school commitments. A huge factor is also procrastination.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think teachers when they say because I got a certain grade [in the past] I can't do something (2 votes). • Technology, social networks (4 votes). • Games, phones and social media. • My laziness (1 vote). • Social media. • Staying up late on the phone, watching Netflix (1 vote). • Spending too much time caring for others. • Cannabis • Seeing my parents struggle financially (1 vote).
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes I put pressure on myself and sometimes laziness (2 votes). • My dad try to stop me when am do thing that might help me in future. • Pressure • Old friends (3 and 4, 2 votes). • Old family • Old friends • Pressure

10	What topics acknowledge or value ethnic diversity? (Group discussion then individual response)
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my A level sociology course, I learned about studies done by Black sociologies. A level media studies featured work done by Black sociologies • Art - media • Neither physics or maths or economics represents ethnic diversity. • Lack of representation especially in English (subjects of books and writers all white), Drama (theorists are all white e.g. Brecht, Stanislavsky), History (brief look at slavery in younger years, South Africa in younger years, but that was a one off, civil rights movement course work, not shown Black queens and kings in power), Sociology - culture and identity, Mary Fuller Black girls study, crime and deviance - Gilroy and Hall. • Media - we learn about representation of ethnic minorities, how they are portrayed and may respond to different media text. Art you can create the work that reflects your culture or issues surrounding it. • Sociology - certain sociologists ... of ethnic background and looking ... at ethnic minorities in society. English - not acknowledged. History - only acknowledged in a negative light • History - it has acknowledged what people of Black / mixed ethnicities have gone through e.g. civil rights, apartheid, slavery. Psychology - not really. • Media - we look at representation of ethnic people ... looking into media's view. • Psychology - not as a Black young female. Sociology - more than psychology values ... ethnic diversity though not enough. • Psychology acknowledges ethnic diversity but do not value it very much. • Sociology values ethnic diversity - it researches differences in achievement, crime rates etc. between ethnicities. • Psychology - differences between cultures. History - civil rights. Sociology - Cultural diversity. • Sociology - talks about ethnic differences in terms of crime rates, educational achievement etc., whereas psychology tends to make a lot of vast generalisations. • History - acknowledges but does not value.

<p>B</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociology - family, ethnic ... • History - civil rights movement. • Sociology – negative, all ethnic groups live in lone parent families. • None • I think sociology does acknowledge ethnic diversity as sociologists like Stuart Hall acknowledge the hardship a Black man will face in the U.K. • None • No • History – negatively, never states the good things [that] were done by Black people. • I believe all topics acknowledge ethnic diversity. • Health and social care - saying that Black and Asian [people] are all poor and deprived • No • None 																																				
<p>C</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, not valued. History acknowledged - slavery • No: news media – acknowledged but not valued – shootings and stabbings. • History - yes I learned but it was negative because I felt people judged me because of my race. • Sociology – Black people were not allowed on stage therefore White people would come on the stage and portray Black people. • English [acknowledged ethnic diversity] but does not value. • They hate us [this was in relation to the media]. 																																				
<p>Participants were able to distinguish between acknowledgement and valuing. Many responses highlighted the fact the participants felt that many topics do not acknowledge or value their ethnicity and have responded with none or no.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Topic</th><th>Positive acknowledgement</th><th>Negative acknowledgement</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Sociology</td><td>Yes</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr> <td>Media</td><td>Yes</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr> <td>Physics</td><td>No</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr> <td>Maths</td><td>No</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr> <td>Economics</td><td>No</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr> <td>English literature</td><td>No</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr> <td>History</td><td>Yes</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr> <td>Psychology</td><td>No</td><td>Yes</td></tr> <tr> <td>Art</td><td>Yes</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr> <td>Drama</td><td>No</td><td>No</td></tr> <tr> <td>Health and social care</td><td>No</td><td>Yes</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Topic	Positive acknowledgement	Negative acknowledgement	Sociology	Yes	Yes	Media	Yes	Yes	Physics	No	No	Maths	No	No	Economics	No	No	English literature	No	No	History	Yes	Yes	Psychology	No	Yes	Art	Yes	No	Drama	No	No	Health and social care	No	Yes	
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11	Which aspects of the curriculum reflect your ethnicity? (Group discussion then individual response)
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art - researching about cultures and picking our own themes which [we] like to explore as well as media and the way we look at youth and the society we live in today. • Neither maths nor physics nor economics represent me. • In media studies we are learning about the representation of Black males in the media. • English literature - any ethnicity isn't reflected; Black writers / poets aren't looked at. History - only glanced over in a negative light (e.g. slavery) and not in depth. • Not much; curriculum is extremely Eurocentric [and I] don't see myself represented too much. Sociology [has] some focus on ethnicity. • In media we learn about theorists who are Black. We watch films and other media ... that feature Black actors or were made by Black film makers or contain topics that reflect Black youth culture. In Art we don't do much on Caribbean art / artists. • The curriculum doesn't really reflect my ethnicity. • Art does not really [include many] ethnic topics in it. • Black history month, although it is very superficial and isn't acknowledged much in this school. • Black history month tries to, but I feel it's a bit superficial. We should learn it whenever applicable with no discrimination, rather than a half-hearted attempt one month a year. Other than this, not really to be honest. • Black Caribbean contributions not discussed! E.g. Florence Nightingale as opposed to Mary Seacole, not taught about revolutions or important Black figures. • Psychology acknowledged differences between cultures and ethnic backgrounds.
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None • None • None • There isn't • Science textbooks only reflect Black people in poverty. • Economics reflects the Black community in a light of poverty - media represent the Black community in a negative light. • In ... media discussing the riots and the Black males were bad and in gangs. • The evaluations of sociologists like ... Charles Murray / new right reflect my ethnicity as it shows that not every Black person is from the underclass as Charles Murray implies.
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, it doesn't because everyone is a hypocrite, people judge on a sport. • No - PE it wasn't positive. • History yes and no, they did a bit [but] not enough. • No - sociology they portray Black people very bad and they use the media. • None

Participants opinions are summarised below:	
Curriculum	Reflection of participant's ethnicity?
Art	A few positive
Maths	None
Physics	None
Economics	In a light of poverty
Sociology	Positive and negative
Media studies	Positive and negative
English literature	None
History	Negative
PE	Negative
Psychology	Acknowledged differences between cultures
Black history month	Superficial
Science books	Only Black people in poverty

Appendix H: Data recorded from teachers' questionnaires

In the tables in this section, colour coding was used to identify common themes.

1	What does learners' achievement mean to you?
1: Art teacher	Individual learning plans with personal targets Personal achievement Setting own targets Grades/levels, reaching potential set by teachers
2: Economics teacher	Successful outcomes University Apprenticeships Work based training Job Broad, open minded and confident Enjoy learning-being part of the community
3: Business & Law teacher	It means making progress from their original starting point Can be at various levels of pace/speed-depending on their ability and level of the student
4: Sociology teacher	It is about their grades on one level and unfortunately that has become the main focus for 'achievement'. Self-confidence, greater awareness of themselves and the world around them
5: Sociology teacher	Achieving their 'potential' That is the highest they want or think they can achieve in conjunction with what teachers and data suggest they are able to achieve. Although I often think they can achieve more than what the data suggest.
6: Sociology teacher	A lot, not for me as a teacher but for students achieving in something they have put a lot of time and effort into. I always like to hear how my students are doing, progress they are marking and how this is affecting them as a person e.g. confidence etc.
Analysis of participants' responses	Students Teachers Social Development

2	How does the academic achievement of ethnic groups of learners differ?
1: Art teacher	Over time in my subject it is relatively similar with all ethnic groups reaching potential or similarly failing / not reaching potential. Attendance - I have seen a difference in this for boys (particularly Afro-Caribbean boys)
2: Economics teacher	Dependent on their socio-economic background outcomes nationally are improving. But Black boys tend to underperform as do Bangladeshi students. In B focus is on all students - as a result of multicultural nature of the school all are given the same care, opportunities and support so we aim to achieve well with ethnic groups
3: Business & Law teacher	Hard to judge but in our current cohort of Business/ICT BTEC our male Afro- Caribbean boys are going against the general trend and are performing well
4: Sociology teacher	In this school I find it hard to really generalise, but subjectively I find that White British and Black African and students from central Asia backgrounds tend to perform well on test and exams
5: Sociology teacher	I think this is difficult to say as we have a large cohort of Black Afro- Caribbean students. Generally, I would say that Asian students achieve more highly or certainly have high expectations. With White students I find it varies hugely on an individual basis and similarly with African-Caribbean students –generally I could say that girls achieve more highly.
6: Sociology teacher	African-Caribbean [students] are more likely to underachieve along with members from ethnic groups such as Pakistani. Chinese most likely to achieve. In my experience, those of Chinese background normally do well. Children from an African–Caribbean background differ: some really achieve whilst others fall behind. I've found in most situations it is the student's attitude that makes the difference.
Analysis of participants' responses	Differentiation Behavioural attitudes

3	Why do you think this is the case?
1: Art teacher	Individual cases-background Love for the subject-want to succeed. Creative students tend to opt for these subjects because they enjoy them. Often failure is down to individual lack of organisation!! Attendance-again lack of organisation
2: Economics teacher	Strong pastoral system Curriculum choice which enables students to progress-though narrow at this moment Care and ethos that every child matters Attention to student's needs-financial, emotional and curricular Small school environment
3: Business & Law teacher	Excellent support structures / procedures within the faculty area / department Good relationships between staff and students
4: Sociology teacher	I ... one student from a Black African background saying to me a few years ago that African parents have exceptional high expectations e.g. doctors, lawyer even though their parents did not come from that background. But ultimately, I'd say class is by far the biggest reason for the differences in achievement
5: Sociology teacher	African-Caribbean girls tend to be more motivated and conscientious, more concerned about doing well. Boys tend to be more relaxed, leaving work until the last minute and less bothered about doing well. Often, they say they want to do well but admit they find it hard to motivate themselves to work.
6: Sociology teacher	Some students from a Chinese ethnic background have a lot of support and interest from home which is shown at parents' evening. However, main differences came from the attitude of the student. This could be due to the pupil subcultures or lack of interest at home
Analysis of participants' responses	Motivation Support Class

4	What strategies may improve African-Caribbean learners' success?
Art teacher	Directing themes/topics to suit learners of all ethnicities-giving stimulus which is open to interpretation Focusing on what is necessary to reach HE They are often set to reach goals to get to university etc.
2: Economics teacher	Motivation- peer support Roles models from the Afro-Caribbean community Pastoral support and care High expectations- strong disciplined approach
3: Business & Law teacher	Reward strategies Parental contact
4: Sociology teacher	It's hard to say. I do think that there is much more of an anti-establishment mentality amongst Caribbean students ingrained from perceptions of the police / court system / racism in wider society. I would say there needs to be greater development in early years (either benefits or support-e.g. Sure start, as well as greater role models
5: Sociology teacher	More positive role models in school - from similar backgrounds. Having said this we do have what I consider to be a fairly good representation of staff in our school. Active learning that relates to their experiences and interests
6: Sociology teacher	Positive role models - more within school setting as aspirations. Positive reinforcement within school setting, making sure students have interventions before they fall too far behind. Bringing in topics / areas within the national curriculum (NC) linked more to their culture.
Analysis of participants' responses	Role models Student support Early years Teaching

5	How can teaching be made more relevant to learners from different cultural backgrounds?
1: Art teacher	Stimulating / topics - relating to a range of ethnic backgrounds, links to holidays, particular dates etc. When talking about artist/designers - respond to a range from around the world (not just your Picasso and Matisse!!)
2: Economics teacher	Provide them with curriculum choice and a curriculum that reflects their culture and background - make it pertinent to them
3: Business & Law teacher	Projects which are inclusive of all types or cultural backgrounds
4: Sociology teacher	More Caribbean teachers rising to SLT positions, More history lessons which focus on Caribbean culture. Not in relation to British influences. Much of the history curriculum is either implicitly White British or explicitly White British and any history of Black groups often shows them in a position of subordination e.g. slavery, civil rights movement – this creates such a negative perception of Black history and culture.
5: Sociology teacher	A consideration of all values and beliefs rather than just that of the white middle class. Perhaps teachers often teach from the view that their own beliefs are right and teach based on this.
6: Sociology teacher	Make sure students background are covered in subject areas E.g. English – more focus on different ethnic writers, which normally will have elements of their experiences in their text. More of a focus in history, less westernised i.e. not just the world wars. Could look at immigration and why it happened. Should scrap Black History month and make it current in national curriculum so do not need to reserve one month a year.
Analysis of participants' responses	Culturally relevant / inclusive curriculum Staffing Negative impact of present curriculum Teacher's own belief system

6	What influences learners' levels of motivation?
1: Art teacher	Food Rewards - especially things that are more 'grown up' - trips, workshops Pace in lessons - interactive Time for them to discuss, talk, reflective on learning...they enjoy the sound of their own voice in a safe environment!
2: Economics teacher	Home life Finance Friends and peers Media-social media/society
3: Business & Law teacher	Personal relationships (inside and outside) Rewards Progression Place
4: Sociology teacher	Good teaching Good student to lessons Mixed ability groups Relevance to the students own lives Positive feedback / praise
5: Sociology teacher	The subject content They like 'discussion' debate lessons' where they have to write less. The friends they are sat with - a learner's level of motivation changes hugely depending on the person they are sat next to. Boys and girls sat next to each other often cause more problems at AS/A2.
6: Sociology teacher	Grades - if students are doing well they are normally more motivated. Friends – if you are in a group of friends that focus on their study you are more likely to do the same. Teachers - if your teacher encourages you helps you focused more likely to achieve Support from home
Analysis of participants' responses	Good teaching / culturally relevant Teacher impact Peer groups / friends Gender, home

7	What affects teachers' expectations for different groups of learners?
1: Art teacher	From KS3/4 I have often found Afro-Caribbean boys the hardest to engage at the start often due to intimidating behaviour- which can still be seen in year 12. Once relationships are built this issue stops Over time I have more problems with keeping white boys motivated and dedicated - they seem to lack the drive to reach their own goals as the year goes on.
2: Economics teacher	Pressure to achieve results and curriculum changes (constant) There should not be different expectations Their own preconceptions and cultural background
3: Business & Law teacher	Socio-economic background Any SEN provisions Previous attainment
4: Sociology teacher	Data!! We're given target minimum grades before we've even met the kid. This means that our perception of their ability is already shaped before we teach them
5: Sociology teacher	Behaviour. If they are poorly behaved, then their expectations drop. Level of interaction with the teacher- if asking questions and showing evidence of independent work then their expectations go up.
6: Sociology teacher	Attitude in class - the way they approach the subject and learning. Students who do not turn up, misbehave, miss deadlines less likely to have the same expectations as these who I do not think teachers' expectations are affected by the student's social group (class, ethnicity, gender), more their behaviour and attitude in their lessons and how they respond to intervention.
Analysis of participants' responses	Fear Pressure to achieve Teachers own stereotypes Students behaviour Social class Data

8.1	Thinking specifically about the achievement of different ethnic groups of learners: How could levels of motivation and aspirations be improved?
1: Art teacher	Help from home: especially with motivation to be organised!
2: Economics teacher	Maintain high expectations
3: Business & Law teacher	No response to this question
4: Sociology teacher	Mixed ability, more positive praise, less data which makes us pre-judge.
5: Sociology teacher	No response to this question (short of time)
6: Sociology teacher	Role models - look what you could achieve.
Analysis of participants' responses	Home High expectations Less use of data to pre-judge Role models

8.2	Thinking specifically about the achievement of different ethnic groups of learners: How could curricula be improved?
1: Art teacher	Artist influences from a range of ethnic backgrounds
2: Economics teacher	Curriculum is relevant to them
3: Business & Law teacher	Very positive about international business leaders / global leaders
4: Sociology teacher	Compulsory history visits which focus on ethnic minorities in no ... relations to British history
5: Sociology teacher	No response to this question (short of time)
6: Sociology teacher	Change the national curriculum and make it less westernised
Analysis of participants' responses	Inclusive curriculum

8.3	Thinking specifically about the achievement of different ethnic groups of learners: Do teachers' expectations have influence?
1: Art teacher	No responds to this question
2: Economics teacher	Yes
3: Business & Law teacher	?
4: Sociology teacher	Absolutely, students get the message quickly
5: Sociology teacher	No response to this question (short of time)
6: Sociology teacher	They can, if teachers label students they may take it on
Analysis of participants' responses	Three of the teachers responded to this question

8.4	Thinking specifically about the achievement of different ethnic groups of learners: Peer group influence?
1: Art teacher	Incredibly important. At this point students are hugely influenced by their peers group - where ethnic groups are all mixed
2: Economics teacher	Can be very helpful / motivational
3: Business & Law teacher	Very influential - outside speakers Workshops
4: Sociology teacher	Yes over all sorts of issues. It's very easy for peer leaders to define what is 'cool' and then change opinions of their friends
5: Sociology teacher	Peer groups definitely have an influence – if your friends are working hard then this motivates students to do the same
6: Sociology teacher	Yes, groups / friends can change attitudes towards education and create a group mentality.
Analysis of participants' responses	All agreed that peer group had influence